
G O S P E L A D V O C A T E S E R I E S

Teacher's Annual Lesson Commentary

ON
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FOR THE
CHURCHES OF CHRIST

1955

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P R E F A C E

With the publication of this volume Gospel Advocate Company will have in circulation ten volumes of TEACHERS ANNUAL LESSON COMMENTARY on Bible School Lessons for churches of Christ. And this is the thirty-fourth annual volume this company has published on the Sunday school lessons for use in churches of Christ.

The material this year is equally divided between the Old Testament and the New Testament, the second and last quarters being from the Old Testament. Paul said these things were written for our learning and for our examples that we may not make the same mistakes made by people of old. Hence, it is profitable for us to spend considerable time studying lessons from the Old Testament. In the first quarter we study some social teachings. Practically all of this material is from the New Testament and deals with our social relationships with one another and our obligations to each other in these various relationships. These lessons are very practical and should raise the standard of morals in the minds of all who study the lessons prayerfully. During the third quarter we study some very fundamental lessons from Paul's letters to the Romans and Galatians. All space possible has been given to comment on the text so these important themes may be developed as fully as possible.

As usual the golden texts have been treated in such manner as will give assistance to brethren who need help in outlining lessons for use in public as well as to assist the teachers to get practical lessons across to their students.

The Dictionary of Proper Names has been compiled from Smith's Bible Dictionary, edited by H. B. Hackett, D.D. In many cases his exact wording of definitions has been used.

This book has been written and is sent forth with the prayer that it will help many to arrive at a better knowledge of the truth and encourage all who use it to live a better and more consecrated life.

THE AUTHOR.

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BIBLE DICTIONARY OF PROPER NAMES

Compiled by Roy H. Lanier

- Aar-on (enlightened), Heb. 7: 11. Brother of Moses, and first high priest of the Levitical order.
- A-bel (breath, transitoriness), 1 John 3: 11, 12. Second son of Adam; murdered by his brother.
- A-bi-a-thar (father of excellence), 1 Chron. 15: 11. Son of Ahimelech who escaped death at the hands of Doeg; high priest of the house of Ithamar during David's reign; replaced by Zadok under Solomon.
- Ab-i-gail (father of exaltation), 1 Sam. 25: 14. Wife of Nabal who saved David from needless bloodshed; became David's wife and the mother of Chileab.
- Abi-hu (he (God) is father), Lev. 10: 1. Son of Aaron who died for offering strange fire.
- Abi-jah (will of Jehovah), 1 Kings 14: 31. Son and successor of Rehoboam to the throne of Judah.
- A-bim-e-lech (father of the king). 1. A Philistine king of Gerar. (Gen. 20: 3.) 2. Son of Gideon by a concubine. (Jude 8: 31.) 3. Son of Abiathar the high priest. (2 Sam. 8: 17.)
- A-bin-a-dab (a father noble or princely). 1. Second son of Jesse, a soldier in Saul's army. (2 Sam. 17: 13.) 2. Son of Saul slain in the battle of Mt. Gilboa. (1 Sam. 31: 2.)
- Ab-i-shag (father of error), 1 Kings 1: 3. A Shunammite damsel who was brought to cherish David who caused Adonijah to lose his life.
- A-bi-shai (father of a gift), 2 Sam. 2: 18. Son of Zeruiah; soldier under Joab.
- Ab-ner (father of light), 1 Chron. 9: 36. Son of Ner; cousin to Saul and captain of Saul's army; faithful to Saul's family until falsely accused; murdered by Joab.
- A-bra-ham (father of a multitude), Gen. 17: 5. Founder of the Hebrew people and father of the faithful.
- Ab-sa-lom (father of peace), 2 Sam. 17: 24. Son of David who led a rebellion in an attempt to take the throne from David, and died in the attempt.
- A-cha-ia, Acts 18: 12. The southern province of Greece with Corinth as capital.
- A-cha-n (troubler), Josh. 7: 1. Soldier who died for stealing devoted material at Jericho.
- A-chish (angry?), 1 Sam. 21: 12. King of Gath who gave David a place of refuge when fleeing from Saul.
- Ad-o-ni-jah (my Lord is Jehovah). 2 Sam. 3: 4. The fourth son of David; attempted to get the throne days before the death of David; slain by Solomon.
- A-gag (violent), 1 Sam. 15: 8. King of Amalek who Saul defeated and brought back, along with animals, for an offering in Gilgal; was slain by Samuel.
- A-grip-pa—See Herod.
- A-hab (father's brother), 1 Kings 21: 1. King of Israel during whose reign Elijah destroyed the prophets of Baal.
- A-has-u-e-rus. 1. Xerxes, king of Persia in the days of Esther. (Esther 1: 1.) 2. Father of Darius king of Chaldea. (Dan. 9: 1.) 3. King of Persia in the days of Ezra. (Ezra 4: 6.)
- A-hi-jah (friend of Jehovah). 1. Son of Ahitub and priest in Shilo. (1 Sam. 14: 3.) 2. A prophet in Shiloh in the days of Jeroboam. (1 Kings 14: 2.)
- A-him-e-lech (brother of the king), 1 Sam. 22: 11. Priest in Nob who gave David help in his flight from Saul, for which he was murdered by Doeg.
- A-hin-o-am (brother of grace or beauty), 1 Sam. 25: 43. Wife of David from Jezreel.
- A-hith-o-phel (brother of foolishness), 2 Sam. 16: 21. Grandfather of Bathsheba who turned against David during the rebellion of Absalom.
- A-i (heap of ruins), Josh. 7: 2. Second city in Canaan to fall to the Israelites.
- Am-a-sa (a burden), 2 Sam. 17: 25. David's nephew who joined Absalom in revolt.
- Am-mon-ites (children of my people), Gen. 19: 38. A people who descended from Ben-am-mi, who was the son of Lot by one of his daughters.
- An-drew (strong man), John 1: 40. Brother of Peter and apostle of Jesus.
- An-ti-och. 1. A city in Syria which became the center of missionary activities with Paul as the leader character. (Acts 11: 26.) 2. A city in Pisidia where Paul preached and founded a church. (Acts 13: 14.)
- Ar-tax-erxes (the great warrior). 1. King of Persia who was influenced to hinder the work of the Jews in the days of Ezra. (Ezra 4: 7.) 2. Another king of Persia who later allowed Nehemiah to go to Jerusalem for twelve years. (Neh. 2: 1.)
- A-sa (curing, physician), 2 Chron. 14: 2. Son of Abijah, and third king of Judah who did much to put down idolatry in his time.
- Ash-to-reth (plural is Ash-to-roth), 1 Kings 11: 5. Female divinity of the Sidonians brought into Jerusalem by Solomon's wives.
- As-syr-i-a, 2 Kings 17: 3. The land into which the ten tribes were taken captive.
- A-ze-kah (dig or till the ground), 1 Sam. 17: 1. A place near where the armies of Israel and the Philistines were encamped when David slew the giant.
- Ba-al (plural is Ba-alim), 1 Kings 18: 19. The supreme male divinity of the Phoenecian and Canaanitish nations whose worship was attractive to the Israelites.
- Ba-a-sha (in the work, or he who seeks), 1 Kings 15: 33. Son of Ahijah and third king of the northern kingdom; walked in the ways of Rehoboam.
- Bar-na-bas (son of exhortation), Acts 4: 36. Friend and companion of Paul in missionary work and who insisted on giving Mark his second chance.
- Bath-she-ba (daughter of an oath, 2 Sam. 11: 3.) Daughter of E-li-am; wife of David; mother of Solomon.
- Be-er-she-ba (well of swearing), Gen. 26: 23. Town in extreme southern portion of Canaan prominent in the lives of Abraham and Isaac.
- Bel-shaz-zar (protect the king), Dan. 5: 1. The last king of Babylon whose feast was interrupted by the hand writing on the wall, the writing being interpreted by Daniel.
- Ben-ha-dad (son or worshipper of Hadad), 1 Kings 15: 20. This is the name of three kings of Damascus playing a prominent part in the history of the Jews from B.C. 950 to 840.
- Ben-ja-min (son of the right hand), 1 Kings 12: 22. Son of Jacob and head of one of the twelve tribes which, together with Judah, formed the southern kingdom.
- Beth-el (house of God), Gen. 35: 14. Ancient city of Canaan; one of the three cities Samuel visited in his work as teacher and judge.
- Beth-le-hem (house of bread), Matt. 2: 5.

Ancient city of Canaan; home of David; and birthplace of Jesus.
 Beth-sa-i-da (house of fish), John 1: 44. A city on the west side of the sea of Galilee, near Capernaum and the home of Peter and Andrew.
 Bu-zi, Ezek. 1: 3. Father of the prophet Ezekiel; lived in Chaldea.

C

Caes-a-re-a. (1) Philippi, one of the most northern points in the journeys of Jesus, Matt. 16: 13. (2) A city about seventy miles northwest of Jerusalem, on the coast; the residence of the Roman rulers in Palestine; and the place where Paul was imprisoned, Acts 23: 23.
 Ca-per-na-um (village of Na-chum), Matt. 11: 23. One of the largest cities on the western shore of the sea of Galilee and the center of many of the activities of Jesus.
 Car-mel (the park), 1 Kings 18: 19. A mountain in northwest Palestine and the site of the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal.
 Ce-phas (rock), 1 Cor. 1: 12. Another name for Peter.
 Chal-de-a, Jer. 50: 10. The southern portion of Babylonia.
 Che-bar, Ezek. 1: 1. A river in Babylonia mentioned in connection with the exiles.
 Che-mosh (subduer; god of fire), 1 Kings 11: 7. A heathen god worshipped by the Moabites and Ammonites, whose religion was brought to Jerusalem by wife of Solomon.
 Cor-nel-i-us (devout). Acts 10: 3. The first Gentile convert to Christianity.
 Cy-prus, Acts 11: 19. An island in the Mediterranean Sea, where Paul and Barnabas worked.

D

Da-gon (diminutive of fish), 1 Sam. 5: 2. A Philistine god, with a man's head and the tail of a fish.
 Da-mas-cus (activity, industry), Acts 9: 2. The city where Paul was baptized, 133 miles north of Jerusalem.
 Dan (judge). (1) Fifth son of Jacob and first by Bilhah, Gen 30: 6. (2) One of the tribes of Israel. (3) A city in the far north part of Palestine, Jude 20: 1.
 Dan-iel (God is judge), Dan. 7: 13. A captive and officer of rank in Babylon, and fourth of the Hebrew major prophets.
 Da-ri-us (the restrainer). (1) The Mede who took Babylon. Dan. 5: 31. (2) King of Persia after Cyrus, Ezra 4: 5. (3) A Persian, probably Darius II, Neh. 12: 22.
 Da-vid (beloved), 1 Sam. 17: 34. Son of Jesse; second king of Israel, a great prophet, and sweet singer in Israel.
 Do-eg (fearful). 1 Sam. 22: 18. A servant of Saul who slew eighty-five persons as a result of the priest giving aid to David.

E

E-bal (mount of stone), Deut. 27: 13. A mountain near Shechem on which men stood to pronounce the curses while others stood on Ger-i-zim to pronounce blessings.
 E-le-a-zar (God's help). (1) Third son of Aaron and second high priest, Ex. 6: 23. (2) Son of A-bin-a-dab and keeper of the ark when the Philistines returned it. 1 Sam. 7: 1
 E-li-jah (Jah is God). 1 Kings 17: 18. A prophet of God in the days of Ahab king of Israel who broke the strength of idolatry in a contest with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel.
 E-li-sha (God is salvation). 2 Kings 4: 13.

A prophet who succeeded Elijah and cured Naaman of his leprosy.
 E-phas-dam-min (blood limit?), 1 Sam. 17: 1. A place in the vale of Elah where David slew the giant Goliath.
 Eph-e-sus, Acts 19: 1. Capital of Asia where Paul established a church, and the center of the worship of Diana.
 E-phra-im (fruitful), Gen. 41: 52. Second son of Joseph and head of one of the tribes of Israel.
 E-sau (hairy, rough), Gen. 25: 25. The first-born of Isaac who sold his birthright to his twin brother Jacob and later lost the blessing.
 E-thi-o-pi-a, Acts 8: 27. A country in Africa, south of the Libyan desert.
 Eu-ni-ce (happily victorious), 2 Tim. 1: 5. Daughter of Lois and mother of Timothy.
 Eve (living, life), Gen. 3: 20. First woman, wife of Adam, and first to sin.
 E-ze-ki-el (God will strengthen), Ezek. 1: 3. God's prophet in Babylonia during the exile and author of the book that bears his name.
 Ez-ra (help), Neh. 8: 1. A learned and zealous priest prominent in the return of the Jews from captivity and in restoring the law of Moses.

G

Gad (fortune). Gen. 30: 11. Seventh son of Jacob and first-born of Zilpah; head of one of the tribes of Israel.
 Ga-la-ti-a, Acts 16: 6. A province of Asia Minor, where Paul preached and to whose people one of his Epistles is addressed.
 Gen-tiles (nations, foreigners), Acts 15: 3. A word used to designate all people other than Jews, and often with a disagreeable connotation.
 Ger-i-zim, Deut. 27: 12. A mountain near Shechem on which stood those who pronounced blessings on Israel while others stood on mount Ebal to pronounce curses.
 Ge-shem (filthy), Neh. 2: 19. An Arabian associated with Sanballat and Tobias in an effort to stop the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple.
 Gib-e-ah (hill). (1) A village in Judah, Josh. 15: 57. (2) A city in Benjamin, Judges 19: 14.
 Gib-e-on (belonging to a hill). Josh. 9: 3. A city of the Hivites in central Palestine whose inhabitants deceived Joshua and made a covenant with Israel.
 Gid-e-on (a hewer, brave warrior). Judges 6: 11. A man of the tribe of Manasseh who became judge of Israel and a great military leader.
 Gi-hon (stream). (1) Second river of Eden, Gen. 2: 13. (2) A place near Jerusalem where Solomon was anointed king. 1 Kings 1: 33.
 Gil-bo-a (bubbling fountain). 1 Sam. 31: 1. A mountain where Saul and his sons died.
 Gil-e-ad (heap of witness). Judges 11: 1. A district of country east of Jordan.
 Gil-gal (a circle), Josh 9: 6. The site of the first camp of Israel on the west side of Jordan.
 Go-li-ath (splendor, brilliant), 1 Sam. 17: 4. A Philistine of Gath who challenged the army of Israel to single combat and was slain by David.

H

Hag-gai (festive), Hag. 1: 1. A prophet who encouraged the Jews in rebuilding the temple and who wrote the book which bears his name.

Ha-na-ni (gracious). (1) A seer who rebuked king Asa for his want of faith, 2 Chron. 16: 7. (2) A priest in the time of Ezra, Ez. 10: 20. (3) A brother of Nehemiah who was made governor of Jerusalem, Neh. 1. 2.

Ha-za-el (God sees), 1 Kings 19: 15. The man who murdered Ben-hadad to become king of Damascus.

He-bron (union, alliance), 2 Sam. 2: 1. One of the oldest towns in the world; the place where Abraham first entered the promised land.

Herod. The name of an Idumaen family given the rule over Palestine by the Caesars

- (1) Herod the Great. Matt. 2: 3. The king who sought to kill Jesus in Bethlehem.
- (2) Herod Antipas, Matt. 14: 1. The king who beheaded John the Baptist.
- (3) Herod Archelaus, Matt. 2: 22. The son and successor to Herod the Great.
- (4) Herod Agrippa I, Acts 12: 1. The man who killed James and imprisoned Peter.
- (5) Herod Agrippa II, Acts 26: 1. The man before whom Paul made his defense.
- (6) Herod Philip, Mark 6: 17. Former husband of Herodias and brother of Herod Antipas.

He-ro-di-as, Mark 6: 17. Wife of Herod Philip taken unlawfully by Herod Antipas, and the woman who demanded the head of John the Baptist for her daughter.

Hez-e-ki-ah (strength of Jehovah), 2 Kings 20: 21. Twelfth king of Judah and one of the three best kings whose life was miraculously extended in answer to his prayer.

Hi-ram (noble born), 2 Sam. 5: 11. King of Tyre who assisted Solomon in building the temple.

Ho-she-a (God is help), 2 Kings 15: 30. The nineteenth and last king of Israel and the best man to sit on the throne of that nation.

I

Id-u-mae-a (red) Mark 3: 8. Greek name for Edom, a country south of Palestine which was given to Esau.

I-sa-iah (Jehovah's salvation), Isa. 1: 1. Son of Amoz and one of the great prophets of Judah from the time of Uzziah to Hezekiah; writer of the book which bears his name.

Ish-bi-be-nob (dwelling in rest), 2 Sam. 21: 16. A Philistine giant who attacked David and was slain by A-bi-shai.

Ish-bo-sheth (the man of shame), 2 Sam. 2: 8. Son of Saul who attempted to hold the throne after the death of his father.

Is-ra-el (he who striyeth with God), Rom. 11: 26. A name given to Jacob and his posterity.

Ith-a-mar (land of palms), Ex. 6: 23. The youngest son of Aaron whose descendants were high priests from the time of Eli to Zadok.

J

Ja-cob (supplanter), Gen. 25: 26. Son of Isaac and father of the twelve tribes.

James (same as Jacob, supplanter). (1) Brother of John and an apostle, Matt. 10: 2. (2) Son of Alphaeus and one of the apostles, called the Less, Mark 3: 18. (3) The brother of Jesus, and the writer of the epistle which bears his name, Matt. 13: 55.

Ja-zer - also - Ja-az-er (place hedged about), Num. 32: 1. A town on the east side of Jordan in or near Gilead.

Je-hu (Jehovah is he). 2 Kings 9: 2. Tenth

king of Israel and founder of the fifth dynasty who destroyed the house of Ahab.

Jeph-thah (Jehovah will open), Jude 11: 3. A Gileadite and judge of Israel who made a rash vow to offer whatever met him upon his return from a victory in battle.

Jer-i-cho (place of fragrance), Josh. 2: 1. The first city in Canaan taken by Israel.

Jer-o-bo-am (whose people is many), 1 Kings 12: 20. First king of Israel after the division, and who introduced idolatry to keep his people away from Jerusalem.

Je-ru-sa-lem (foundation of peace), 2 Sam. 5: 6. The city from which David drove the Jeb-u-sites in order to establish his throne there.

Jesse (gift of God), Ruth 4: 22. Inhabitant of Bethlehem and father of David.

Jew, Esther 2: 5. A name at first applied to a citizen of the northern kingdom of Judah, but after the return from captivity was given to all children of Israel.

Jez-e-bel (chaste), 2 Kings 9: 22. A foreigner and wife of Ahab who worshipped idols and attempted to force all Israel into idolatry.

Jo-ab (Jehovah is father), 1 Kings 11: 15. Nephew of David and -commander of the army.

Jo-el (whose God is Jehovah). (1) Eldest son of Samuel, 1 Sam. 8: 2. (2) One of the minor prophets; writer of the book which bears his name.

John (whom Jehovah has graciously given). (1) John the Baptist, forerunner of Jesus, Matt. 3: 1. (2) Son of Zebedee, brother of James, and an apostle, Matt. 10: 2. (3) John Mark, companion of Paul and Barnabas and writer of the second Gospel which bears his name, Acts 12: 12.

Jon-a-than (the gift of Jehovah), 1 Sam. 14: 49. Son of Saul and friend of David.

Jop-pa (beauty), Acts 9: 36. A city on the Mediterranean, port for Jerusalem, at present called Jaffa.

Josh-ua (whose help is Jehovah), Ex. 24: 13. Friend and successor of Moses who led the children of Israel into Canaan and divided the land among the tribes.

Jo-tham (Jehovah is upright), 2 Kings 15: 32. Son of Uzziah and eleventh king of Judah.

Ju-dah (praise). (1) Fourth son of Jacob and head of a tribe. (2) The name given the southern kingdom composed of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. 1 Kings 12: 21, 22.)

K

Kid-ron, Neh. 2: 15. A brook which ran between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives.

Kish (bow), 1 Sam. 9: 1. The father of king Saul.

Ko-rah (baldness), Num. 16: 1. Son of Izhar, a Levite, who took part in a rebellion against Moses and Aaron.

L

La-od-i-ce-a, Rev. 3: 14. A city on the Lycus river about forty miles from Ephesus where was located one of the seven churches of Asia addressed by John in Revelation.

Laz-a-rus (God has helped). (1) Brother of Mary and Martha raised from the dead by Jesus, John 11: 17ff. (2) A beggar unattended by the rich man. Luke 16: 19ff.

Leb-a-non (white), 2 Kings 14: 9. Mountain ranges lying north of the land of Israel and the source of the cedar which went into the building of the temple.
Lois, 2 Tim. 1: 5. The grandmother of Timothy.
Luther, Martin. A monk who broke with the Roman Catholic Church and became the leader of the Reformation and founder of the Lutheran Church.

M

Ma-a-cah or Ma-a-chah (depression), 1 Kings 15: 13. Daughter of Absalom, wife of Rehoboam, mother of Abijah, and grandmother of Asa, who encouraged idolatry in Judah.
Mac-e-dó-ni-a, Acts 16: 12. The northern division of Greece and the first portion of Europe to receive the gospel by Paul and his company.
Ma-nas-seh (making to forget), Gen. 41: 51. (1) Son of Joseph and head of one tribe. (2) Thirteenth king of Judah, very wicked, but ruled longer than any other king.
Ma-on (habitation), Josh. 15: 55. A town in the hill country of Judah.
Mark, Acts 12: 12. Son of Mary, cousin of Barnabas, companion of apostles, and writer of the second book in New Testament.
Mar-tha (lady, feminine of Aramaic word for Lord), Luke 10: 38. Sister of Lazarus.
Mary (same as Miriam in O. T.). (1) Mother of Jesus, Matt. 1: 21. (2) Magdalene, first to see Jesus after the resurrection, John 20: 14. (3) Sister of Lazarus, John 11: 19. (4) Mother of John Mark, Acts 12: 12.
Mat-ta-ni-ah (gift of Jehovah), 2 Kings 24: 17. The last king of Judah called Ze-de-ki-ah, placed on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar.
Mat-thew (gift of Jehovah), Matt. 10: 3. Another name for Levi, one of the apostles, and the writer of the book which bears his name.
Mel-chiz-e-dek (king of righteousness) Heb. 7: 1. Priest and king of Salem in the time of Abraham, whose priesthood was a type of that of Christ.
A-len-a-hem (consoler), 2 Kings 15: 14. Seventeenth king of Israel; paid heavy tribute to Assyria to maintain freedom.
Me-phis-o-sheth (idol-extirminator). (1) Son of Saul slain, with six others, by the Gibeonites to avenge the wrongs of Saul, 2 Sam. 21: 1-9. (2) Son of Jonathan to whom David showed kindness on account of his oath to Jonathan, 2 Sam. 4: 4.
Mes-o-po-ta-mi-a (high land of two rivers), Gen. 28: 2. The country between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, 700 miles long and 20 to 250 miles wide.
Mich-mash (something hidden, treasure), 1 Sam. 13: 5. A town seven miles north of Jerusalem remembered in connection with the war with the Philistines.
Mid-i-an (strife, contention). (1) Son of Abraham by Keturah, Gen. 25: 2. (2) A land inhabited by the Midianites between Edom and Paran, 1 Kings 11: 18.
Mil-com (their king), 1 Kings 11: 5, 7. The god of the Ammonites, probably the same as Molech.
Mir-i-am (their rebellion), Num. 12: 1. Sister of Moses and leader of the women during the wilderness wanderings.
Miz-pah (the watch tower), 1 Sam. 10: 17. A town in Benjamin where all Israel accepted Saul as their king; one of the three cities north of Jerusalem where Samuel judged the people.

Mo-ab (from my father?), Gen. 19: 37.

(1) Son of Lot by his eldest daughter.
(2) A land north of Edom and east of Jordan inhabited by the Moabites.
Mo-ses (drawn out), Ex. 19: 7. Son of Amram, deliverer of Israel from bondage, giver of the law, and mediator of the old covenant.

N

Na-a-mah (pleasing, lovely), 1 Kings 14: 21. An Ammonite, the wife of Solomon and mother of Rehoboam.
Na-bal (fool), 1 Sam. 25: 3. A man of Maon in Carmel who refused to assist David, but whose wife, Abigail, gave help and apologized for her husband's mean disposition.
Na-dab (noble, generous), Num. 3: 2. Eldest son of Aaron who died for offering strange fire before Jehovah.
Na-hash (serpent), 1 Sam. 11: 1. King of the Ammonites who would have put out the eyes of the people of Jabesh-gilead.
Ná-than (given). (1) The prophet who rebuked David for his sin, 2 Sam. 12: 7.
(2) Son of David by Bathsheba, 1 Chron. 3: 5.
Naz-a-reth (branch), Luke 4: 16. A town in Galilee where Jesus was reared.
Naz-i-rite or Na-za-rite, Num. 6: 2. One of either sex who was bound by a vow of a peculiar kind to be set apart from others for the service of God.
Neb-u-chad-nez-zar (Nebo is protector against misfortune), 2 Kings 24: 1. Greatest and most powerful king of Babylon who destroyed Jerusalem and took the people captive.
Ne-hush-ta (brass), 2 Kings 24: 8. Daughter of Elna-than and mother of Je-hoi-a-chin.
Ne-ro. Emperor of the Roman Empire under whom Paul was tried and executed.
Nim-shi (drawn out, saved), 1 Kings 19: 16. Grandfather, usually called father, of Jehu.
No-ah (rest), Gen. 6: 8. Tenth in descent from Adam, son of Lamech, who built an ark by faith for the saving of his house from the flood.
Nob (elevation), 1 Sam. 22: 11. The place of residence of the priests who were slain by Doeg at the order of Saul for giving aid to David.

O

O-bed-e-dom (servant of Edom), 2 Sam. 6: 12. A Levite in whose house David left the ark after his first attempt to move it to Jerusalem.
O1-i-vet or Mount of Olives, Acts 1: 12. The place east of Jerusalem from which Jesus ascended into heaven.
Om-ri (servant of Jehovah), 1 Kings 16: 21. Sixth king of Israel who built Samaria.

P

Pal-es-tine (land of strangers). The word occurs four times in the King James Version, but not at all in the American Standard Version, which has Philistia. It is used to mean only a part of Canaan along the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. But common usage today applies it to all of Canaan, the holy land.
Pe-kah (opening), 2 Kings 15: 27. Eighteenth king of Israel during whose reign the Assyrians took many of the people into captivity.
Pe-ni-el (the face of God), Gen. 32: 30. The place where Jacob wrestled with Jehovah as he was returning from Pad-

dan-a-ram with his family and possessions.
 Pen-ta-teuch. A Greek name given to the first five books of the Old Testament, the writings of Moses.
 Pen-te-cost (fiftieth), Acts 2: 1. A Jewish feast day fifty days after passover, and the day on which Jesus established his church.
 Per-si-a, Esther 1: 3. The Empire of Ahasuerus, or Xerxes, in the time of Esther.
 Phar-i-sees (separated), Acts 23: 6. A religious sect of the Jews who believed in angels, spirits, and the resurrection.
 Phi-lis-tines (wanderer), 1 Sam. 14: 1. People from Crete who settled in Canaan along the Mediterranean Sea and were enemies of Israel.
 Phryg-i-a, Acts 16: 6. A province in Asia Minor through which Paul traveled on his way to Troas.
 Pi-late, Matt. 27: 2. Governor of Judaea before whom Jesus was tried.
 Pros-e-lyte, Matt. 23: 15. A new convert; used in N. T. of Gentiles converted to the Jewish religion.
 Pul, 2 Kings 15: 19. King of Assyria who put Israel under heavy tribute.

R

Ra-chel (a ewe), Gen. 29; 28. Daughter of Laban, wife of Jacob, mother of Joseph and Benjamin.
 Ra-hab (broad, large), Josh. 2: 1. The woman who hid the spies in Jericho and whose family was saved when that city was destroyed.
 Ra-mah (the height), 1 Sam. 1: 19. Home of Samuel; see full name in 1 Sam. 1: 1.
 Re-chab-ites (horsemen), Jer. 35: 2. A family of Kenites who came into Canaan with the Israelites and retained their identity and family customs and habits.
 Re-ho-bo-am (enlarger of the people), 1 Kings 11: 43. Son of Solomon and first king of Judah after the division of the kingdom.
 Reph-i-dim (rest or stays), Ex. 17: 1. A place in the wilderness where the Israelites got water from the rock, and where they fought with the Amalekites.
 Reu-ben (see, a son), Gen. 29: 32. First-born of Jacob and the one who saved the life of Joseph.
 Rome, Rom. 1: 7. Seat of government in the Roman Empire where Paul was imprisoned and was executed.
 Ruth (a friend?), Ruth 1: 4. A woman of Moab, daughter-in-law of Naomi, and who later married Boaz to enter the ancestral line of Jesus.

S

Sad-du-cees, Acts 23: 7. A religious sect of the Jews, thought to be followers of one Zadok, who denied the existence of angels and spirits, and the resurrection.
 Sa-ma-ri-a (Shemer's watch-mountain), 1 Kings 16: 24. A city built by king Omri; its people were hostile to Jesus, but many converted by Philip.
 Sam-u-el (asked of God), 1 Sam. 1: 20. Son of El-ka-nah and Hannah, judge of Israel, anointed Saul first king of Israel.
 San-bal-lat (giving strength to the army?) Neh. 2: 10. One of the three enemies of the Jews while rebuilding Jerusalem after the captivity.
 San-he-drin. The supreme court of the Jews consisting of seventy members.

Sar-gon (prince of the sun), Isa. 20: 1. A warrior king of Assyria.
 Saul (asked for), 1 Sam. 10; 21. Son of Kish, first king of Israel.
 Sep-tu-a-gint. The Greek version or translation of the Old Testament made in the first half of the third century B.C.
 Shal-ma-ne-zer (fire worshipper), 2 Kings 17: 3. King of Assyria who began the final siege of Samaria which resulted in the fall of the city and captivity of the people of the northern kingdom.
 She-ba (seven, or an oath), 2 Sam. 20: 1. Son of Bich-ri, a Benjamite, who had part in Absalom's rebellion and later attempted to start one of his own.
 She-chem (shoulder), 1 Kings 12: 25. An ancient city of Canaan, where Rehoboam was made king and immediately lost ten tribes, and was for a time the seat of Jeroboam's government.
 She-ma-iah (Jehovah hears). (1) A prophet who kept Rehoboam from attacking the northern kingdom immediately after the division, 1 Kings 12: 22. (2) A priest who put away his wife at Ezra's bidding, Ezra 10: 21. (3) A false prophet in the time of Jeremiah, Jer. 29: 24.
 Shim-e-i (renowned), 2 Sam. 16: 5. A Benjamite who cursed David while fleeing from Absalom.
 Si-don (a fishery), Acts 12: 20. A sea-coast town of Phoenicia, just west of Damascus.
 Sim-e-on (a hearing), Gen. 29: 33. Second son of Jacob by Leah and head of a tribe.
 Si-nai (jagged, full of cliffs), Ex. 19: 2. A mountain in Arabia where Moses received the ten commandments, the words of the old covenant.
 So-coh (branches), 1 Sam. 17: 1. A place near the scene of the battle where David slew Goliath.
 So-dom (place of lime), Jude 7. A city in the days of Abraham which was destroyed by fire and brimstone from heaven.
 Sol-o-mon (peaceful), 1 Kings 3: 3. Son of David by Bathsheba and third king of the united kingdom.
 Sy-char, John 4: 5. A place in Samaria near the site of Jacob's well.
 Syria, Acts 15: 41. The country north of Palestine with Damascus as principal city.

T

Ta-mar (palm tree). (1) Wife of Er and Onan, sons of Judah, Gen. 38: 6ff. (2) Daughter of David and sister of Absalom offended by Ammon, 2 Sam. 13: 7ff. (3) Daughter of Absalom, 2 Sam. 14: 27.
 Tar-sus, Acts 11: 25. The home of Paul where Barnabas found him when he wanted a helper in the work at Antioch.
 Tig-lath-pi-le-ser (the son of the Zodiac?), 2 Kings 15: 29. King of Assyria who came against Israel in the days of Pekah.
 Tim-o-thy (honoring God), Acts 16: 1. A Christian at Lystra and associate of Paul.
 Tiph-sha (ford), 2 Kings 15: 16. A city in Syria destroyed by Men-a-hem, king of Israel.
 To-bi-ah (goodness of Jehovah). (1) A family who returned from captivity under Zerubbabel who could not prove their connection with Israel, Neh. 7: 61, 62. (2) An Ammonite slave associated with Sanballat in opposing the rebuilding of Jerusalem.
 Tyre (a rock), 1 Kings 7: 13. A city of Phoenicia and the home of king Hiram

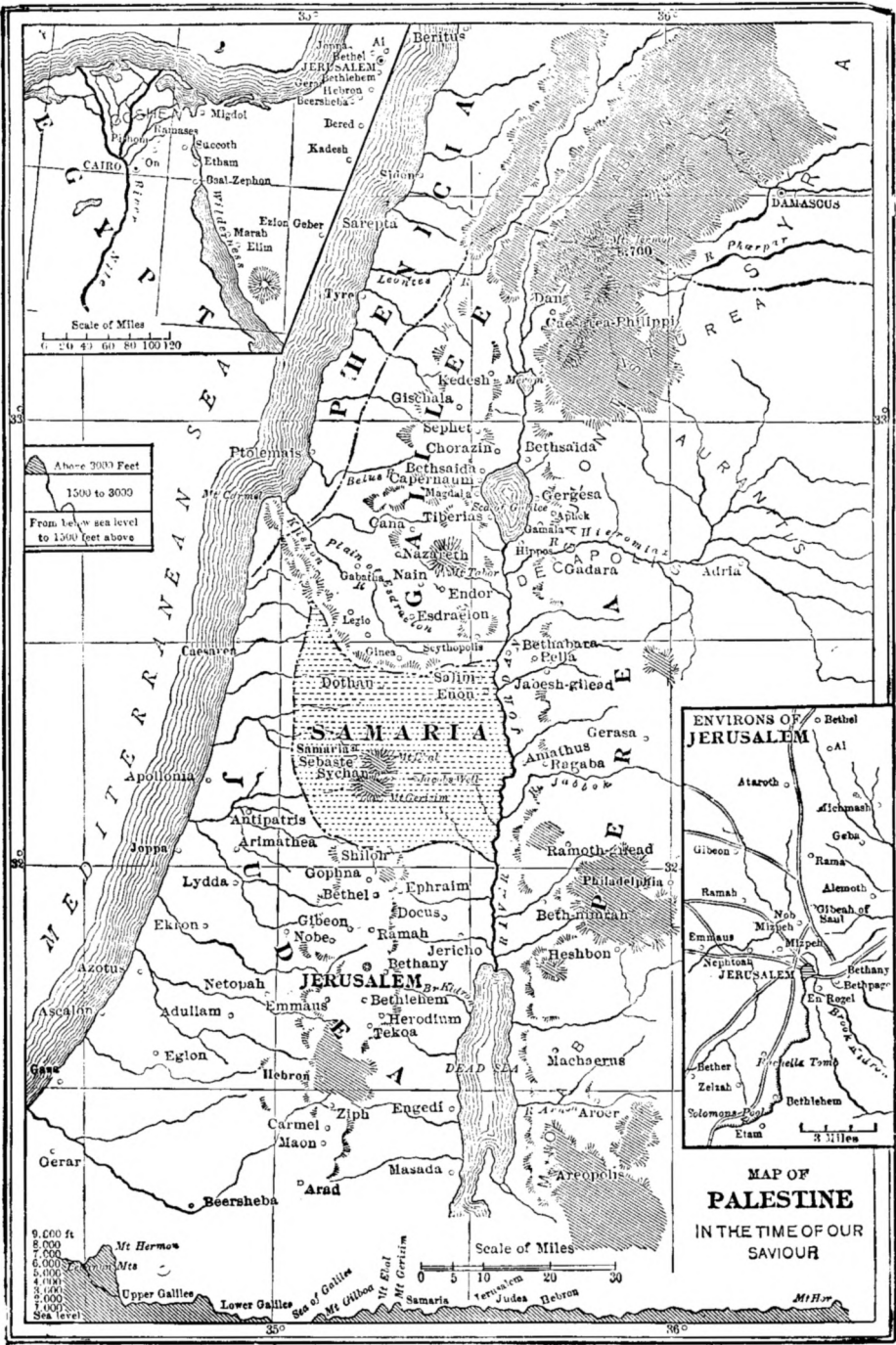
who assisted Solomon in building the temple.

U

- United Kingdom. This term is used with reference to the kingdom from its beginning under Saul, the first king, until the division in the beginning of the reign of Rehoboam. Saul, David, and Solomon each reigned forty years before the kingdom was divided.
- U-ri-ah (light of Jehovah), 2 Sam. 11: 3. A Hittite, a soldier under Joab in David's army, whose wife, Bathsheba, David took.
- U-rim and Thum-mim (lights and perfections). Ex. 28: 30. Objects of unknown size, shape, or composition worn in the breastplate of the high priest when enquiring of Jehovah.
- Uz-zā or Uz-zah (strength), 2 Sam. 6: 3. Son of A-bin-a-dab who died because he put his hand on the ark when David attempted to move it to Jerusalem.
- Uz-zi-ah (strength of Jehovah), 2 Kings 15: 13. Called Az-a-ri-ah, tenth king of Judah, son of Am-a-zi-ah.

Z

- Zed-e-ki-ah (justice of Jehovah), 2 Kings 24: 17. Last king of Judah and put on the throne by the king of Babylon, former name was Mat-ta-ni-ah.
- Ze-rub-ba-bel (dispersed, or begotten, in Babylon) Ezra 2: 2. Leader of the first group of captives to return from Babylonian captivity.
- Ze-ru-iah, 1 Sam 26: 6. The mother of three heroes, Abishai, Joab, and Ashel; perhaps the half-sister of David, 1 Chron. 2: 13-17.
- Zi-ba, 2 Sam. 9: 2. A servant in the house of Saul who put David in touch with Me-phen-o-sheth.
- Zik-lag (a winding, bending), 1 Sam. 27: 6. A Philistine city given by Achish to David.
- Zi-on (sunny), Isa. 2: 3. The name of a mountain in Jerusalem, and the name by which Jerusalem is sometimes called.
- Zipn (battlement), 1 Sam. 23: 14. One of the hiding places of David when fleeing from Saul.
- Zo-bah (statue, public place), 1 Sam. 14: 47. A portion of Syria taken by Saul.



**MAP OF
PALESTINE
IN THE TIME OF OUR
SAVIOUR**



FIRST QUARTER

SOCIAL TEACHING OF THE BIBLE

Aim: To study the scriptures with reference to some of the social relationships Christians sustain with a view of creating correct attitudes and proper habits in dealing with others.

Lesson I—January 2, 1955

OUR OBLIGATIONS TO OTHERS

Lesson Text

Mark 12: 28-34; James 2: 14-17

28 And one of the scribes came, and heard them questioning together, and knowing that he had answered them well, asked him, What commandment is the first of all?

29 Je'-sus answered, The first is, Hear, O Is'-ra-el; The Lord our God, the Lord is one:

30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.

31 The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

32 And the scribe said unto him, Of a truth, Teacher, thou hast well said that he is one; and there is none other but he:

33 And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understand-

ing, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is much more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

34 And when Je'-sus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

14 What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him?

15 If a brother or sister be naked and in lack of daily food,

16 And one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit?

17 Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself.

Golden Text.—“And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.” (Luke 6: 31.)

Devotional Heading.—Psalm 101: 1-7.

Daily Bible Readings

December 27.	M.	First and Second Commandments (Matt. 22: 34-40)
December 28.	T.	Faith Perfected (James 2: 14-26)
December 29.	W.	The Mind of Christ (Phil. 2: 1-11)
December 30.	T.	Helping Others (Luke 10: 25-37)
December 31.	F.	Bearing Burdens (Gal. 6: 1-10)
January 1.	S.	Social and Domestic Relations (Col. 3: 12-16)
January 2.	S.	Christian Standard of Living (1 Pet. 3: 8-17.)

Time.—For Mark A.D. 29; for James about A.D. 60.

Place.—Jerusalem.

Persons.—Jesus, the scribes, and James.

Golden Text Explained

1. **This rule is positive.** Unbelieving critics have charged that Jesus was not original in his moral teachings. Since moral principles are eternal, we would not expect him to advance any new moral lessons. Someone has said, “The new is not true, and the true is not new.” But

Jesus was original in the manner in which he taught these great moral principles. No teacher had ever put them in the positive form as Jesus did. Hillel, a great Jewish teacher, is reported to have taught, “Do not unto another what thou wouldst not have another do unto thee. This is

the whole law; the rest is mere com-mentary." This only obliges one to refrain from doing harm to another which one would not have done to him. But it does not obligate one to do the good to another which that one would wish to be done to him. Our Lord's positive statement of the principle includes both the doing of that which is good to another and re-fraining from that which is evil, which we would have others refrain from doing us.

2. **This rule is determinative.** By this we mean that this rule deter-mines how we will treat others, and it also determines how we are to be treated by others. This principle is seen in other teachings of Christ. Jesus taught that, if we wish to be forgiven, we must forgive others. (Matt. 6: 15.) **And again, Jesus said,** "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be meas-ured unto you." (Matt. V: 1, 2.) **And** we are taught that this rule even ap-plies in judgment, for "judgment is without mercy to him that hath showed no mercy: mercy glorieth against judgment." (James 2: 13.)

So the way we wish to be treated will determine the way we are to treat other people, as well as the way we treat other people determines how we are to be treated.

3. **This rule is obligatory,** (a) We are obligated to follow this rule be-cause we are all brethren. If one race or family of men could prove its superiority to all others, it could well demand special rights and privileges. But since there is no superior race, no race or family of men has any right to expect better treatment than all the others. No social or political clique is any better than other peo-ple. Hence, it is unfair to promote class or party legislation which grants privileges to some which are denied to others, (b) This rule is obligatory because it is the rule of life given by the Lord. Jesus did not waste his time giving non-essential com-mandments. We, therefore, not only owe to our fellow man this treat-ment, but we are obligated, in the sight of the Lord, to render this treatment to others. If we neglect others, we sin against the Lord. In the great judgment scene (Matt. 25) Jesus teaches that the way we treat our fellow man is the way we treat him. So whatever kindness we show to our fellow men we show to the

Lord; and whatever neglect or posi-tive ill treatment we offer to our fellow men this is our treatment of the Lord.

4. **This rule is practicable,** (a) It is easy to understand. A man does not need a college education to un-derstand this rule and how to apply it in his life, (b) It teaches me to think of my brother. It does not allow me to claim rights and privi-leges which I am not willing to grant that my brother should enjoy. If I treat my brother as I wish him to treat me, I will not take liberties for which I would criticize him se-verely for taking, (c) It governs us in all our social relationships. There is not a relationship which I may en-joy with my fellow man where I cannot apply this principle; whether in social intercourse, recreational ac-tivities, the business world, or my home life, I can apply this principle with profit, (d) It is applicable in all my activities. When I am thinking, I should think of others as I would wish them to think of me. When I am speaking, I should speak to and about others as I would wish them to speak to and about me. If I wish them to be kind in their speech to me, I must refrain from harsh, cut-ting, back-biting terms when talking to them. These last two principles will forbid all envy, jealousy, malice, hatred, all tattling and slander, and evil gossip, with reference to our fellow men. Any home which adopts this rule will be a happy home. Any church which adopts and practices this rule will be a happy peaceful church. And any community which adopts and practices this rule will be a happy, contented and peaceful community. And this could be ap-plied to nations and to the world at large. If all the nations of this world would adopt and practice this rule, there would be no more wars, there would be no disregarding of the rights and privileges of other na-tions. We would need no armies, nor would there be any necessity for development of destructive weapons of war. So in one short statement, our Lord has given the recipe for peace on earth and good will among men.

5. **How may I learn to practice this rule?** (a) Study long and pray-erfully the life of Christ and the life of the apostle Paul, (b) Cultivate an earnest desire to live as you find they lived. (c) Cultivate your neighbor. Cultivate his acquaint-

ance. He's perhaps a better fellow than you supposed. And desire earnestly that he will love you. (d) Make it a rule of your life never to allow a day to pass without doing some kind deed or without saying some kind word about your

neighbor and especially about those who are your enemies. We learn to do by doing. And there is no better way to learn to practice this golden rule than by consciously doing something every day which this rule demands.

Exposition of the Text

I. Jesus Answers a Question (Mark 12: 23-31)

One of the scribes came. Matthew calls the man a lawyer. (Matt. 22: 35.) Since the scribes were the students, writers, and teachers of the law, we see why they might be called lawyers. When Moses gave the law, he made it the duty of the priests to be the teachers of the law. (Lev. 10: 11; Deut. 33: 10.) But during the time when Grecian influence was strong, the priests became tainted with Grecian philosophy, and there arose a class of men who studied the law, opposed the teaching of the priests, and finally came to be the defenders of the law, so that in the time of our Lord the scribes were the recognized teachers and interpreters of the law.

Knowing that he had answered them well. This refers to a conversation which Jesus had just concluded with the Sadducees. (Verses 18-27.) We have a record of three debates which Jesus had in close succession. The first was with the Herodians concerning tribute to Caesar. The second was with the Sadducees concerning the resurrection. And now this third is our lesson today with the scribes and Pharisees concerning the great commandment of the law and the relation of Christ to David.

What commandment is the first of all? This was a question of great interest among the Jews. Many thought that the commandment concerning sacrifice was the greatest because of the amount of space given to teaching on sacrifice in the Old Testament. The scribe implies such in verse 33 when he said to love one's neighbor is "much more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices."

The Lord our God, the Lord is one. This is an expression of the unity of God. While there is certainly a plurality of persons or personalities, yet there is a unity of being. Some have used the unity or agreement of husband and wife to illustrate the unity of the Godhead. While there

is agreement in purpose among the persons of the Godhead, the relationship between husband and wife does not include all the unity that exists in the Godhead. This statement does not say that three Gods agree in one. It says there is one God. The reader will do well to study Isa. 42 to 48, to get the Old Testament conception of the unity of God.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. To love God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength simply means to love God with one's whole being; with all his powers and faculties. "Hence it appears that, by this love, the soul eagerly cleaves to, affectionately desires, and constantly rests in God, supremely blessed and satisfied with him as its portion: that it acts from him as its author; for him, as its master; and to him, as its end. That, by it, all the powers and faculties of the mind are concentrated in the Lord of the universe." (Adam Clarke.)

Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Jesus not only gave the scribe an answer to the question he asked, but added a second commandment, which, together with the first, includes all the known duties of man. Jesus said, "On these two commandments the whole law hangeth, and the prophets." (Matt. 22: 40.) By this Jesus means to teach that the individual who loves God with his whole being, and allows that love to control his life, will do everything which God demands of him. And the individual who loves his neighbor as he loves himself will do everything to and for his neighbor which the Lord demands of him. So Paul could say, "Love therefore is the fulfilment of the law." (Rom. 13: 10b.)

There is none other commandment greater than these. Adam Clarke gives ten reasons why the command to love God is the greatest. They are: "(1) In its antiquity, being as old as the world, and engraven originally on our very nature. (2) In dignity: as directly and immediately

proceeding from and referring to God. (3) In excellence; being the commandment of the new covenant, and the very spirit of divine adoption. (4) In justice; because it alone renders to God his due, prefers him before all things, and secures to him his proper rank in relation to them. (5) In sufficiency; being in itself capable of making men holy in this life, and happy in the other. (6) In fruitfulness; because it is the root of all commandments, and the fulfilling of the law. (7) In virtue and efficacy; because by this alone God reigns in the heart of man, and man is united to God. (8) In extent; leaving nothing to the creature, which it does not refer to the creator. (9) In necessity; being absolutely indispensable. (10) In duration; being ever to be continued on earth, and never to be discontinued in heaven."

II. Knowledge of Obligation to God and Others Commended (Mark 12: 32-34)

Of a truth, Teacher, thou hast well said. This scribe seems to have been honest and sincere. He had no ulterior motives in asking Jesus this question. The Herodians and the Sadducees asked questions to entrap Jesus. But this man was anxious to know what Jesus thought on a disputed question. This scribe was well versed, not only in the statement of the law, but also in the meaning of the law. At once he grasped the statement made by our Lord and appreciated the statement as a correct interpretation of the meaning of the law.

There is none other but he. This scribe was a devout believer in monotheism. From the time the Jews entered into Canaan, and lived among the polytheistic Canaanites, they had trouble with this very question. Often they went into idolatry and polytheism. They were carried into captivity because of their sins in these respects. But it seems that their punishment in captivity forever cured them of their desire to worship other gods. The Jews that returned and rebuilt Jerusalem were thoroughly convinced that there is one God and that no images are to be used in his worship. This also shows that both the scribe and our Lord understood the statement of Moses, "The Lord our God, the Lord is one," not only to refer to the unity of the God-

head, but to disprove and forbid polytheism. This scribe echoed the sentiments of Isaiah, "Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me." (Isa. 43:

10.) Again, "I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no God." (Isa. 44: 6.) And again, "For I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me." (Isa. 46: 9.)

Is much more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices. This

statement deserves careful consideration. Let us approach it first negatively. (a) It does not detract from the importance of sacrifice. Love for God and neighbor can be worth more than burnt offerings, and yet burnt offerings can be just as essential and as valuable as the Lord intended they should be. (b) This does not mean that all outward ordinances have no place in religion. The fact that love for God and man is worth more than burnt offerings does not mean that the Jews were at liberty to discontinue their sacrifices. And we might grant that love for God and neighbor is worth more than being baptized and yet that would not prove that baptism should be discontinued. Now, let us look at it from the positive point of view, (a) The statement means that love is more fundamental than burnt offerings and sacrifices. By fundamental we mean that love is the motive for the sacrifice. Before a sacrifice can be acceptable, there must be love. So love is more fundamental than the outward act which expresses the love in the heart, (b) Love is more helpful than sacrifice. Love is the act of the heart, and it is the heart that is developed by love. Sacrifice would not benefit the heart of man except as it gave expression to the love that was in the heart of man. (c) Love is wider in its application. Love expresses itself not only in burnt offerings and sacrifices but in many other ways. So, love is greater than sacrifice because it is general, while sacrifice is specific, (d) We should remember that neither love nor the outward expression of love is acceptable alone. Jesus teaches that if we love him we will keep his commandments. (John 14: 15.) So, since sacrifice was a commandment of God, people who refused to offer sacrifice could not truthfully say that they loved God. So where there was no sacrifice, there was no love, and

where there was no love, there was no acceptable sacrifice.

Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. This man was not far from the kingdom because, (a) he had a proper conception of God. He realized the unity of God, and the importance of putting God first in his life, (b) He had a proper conception of religion. He realized that love for God and man was worth more than outward acts in themselves. He had learned that these outward acts were worth nothing unless they were prompted by love, (c) He was teachable. No one is near the kingdom who has his own conception of things and refuses to give consideration to any further study of the question. However, we should realize that being near the kingdom is not enough. One may live all his life and die near the kingdom, and be lost through eternity. Proper conception of God and of man's duty to God and to his neighbor is worthless unless that conception finds expression in one's everyday life and worship.

III. Faith Without Works (James 2: 14-17)

Can that faith save him? James has been accused by some of not appreciating faith as highly as he should. Some think that he stresses good works too highly. Others think that James contradicts Paul on the subject of faith and works. It is thought by some that Paul believed one could be saved by faith alone, and that James taught that one could be saved by works alone. Neither Paul nor James believed or taught that which is attributed to them in these sentiments. Paul believed that people are saved by faith working through love. (Gal. 5: 6.) James believed and taught that one is saved by works (obedience to God's commandments) which make faith perfect. (James 2: 22.) Again, we should remember that Paul used the word faith in the sense of an obedient faith, a faith which obeys God's commandments. James uses the word faith to mean a mental assent to the truth of the oneness and unity of God which is separate from obedience to gospel commandments. The word *that* in verse 14 refers to the faith described in the preceding phrase. "If a man say he hath faith, but hath not works? can that faith save

him?" A faith that does not obey God is the faith that James has under consideration.

What doth it profit? James illustrates the faith that does not obey God by saying that it is like saying to the naked and the hungry, "Be ye warmed and filled," yet, we do not give them the things needful for the body. There is no more profit in a faith which admits the oneness and unity of God, but does not love and obey God, than there is profit in saying to the naked and hungry, "Be ye warmed and filled," yet we withhold from them the things necessary for the body. We may recognize the need of the poor, we may even desire that his condition be changed for the better, and we may even plan to do something about it in the future, but we must recognize that a good mental attitude toward the poor does not warm his body nor fill his stomach. We have an obligation to do something for the poor, and this is the kind of works which James was talking about when he said that works make our faith perfect. These are the things which God commands, and no one can leave undone the commandments of God and claim to have a living faith.

Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead in itself. This is a rule which has a general application, (a) If the alien sinner does not obey the commandments (do the works) which the Lord gives him, he cannot say that he has the faith which is required of him. One who is unwilling to repent of his sins cannot claim that he has saving faith. One who is ashamed to confess Jesus as Christ the Lord cannot claim that he has saving faith. And one who refuses to be baptized in the name of Christ for the remission of sins cannot claim that he has saving faith. He simply has that kind of faith which the demons have, a faith without works, which is a dead faith, (b) A child of God who refuses to feed the poor and visit the sick cannot claim that he has a saving faith. A child of God who refuses to give of his money for gospel purposes cannot claim to have a saving faith. These are things which God commands. These are the works which God demands that we do, and one who is unwilling to perform these works has nothing more than a dead faith.

Lessons to Learn

1. One who genuinely loves God and his neighbor as himself will obey God and treat his neighbor as he wishes to be treated. Love cannot exist without bearing the fruit of obedience to God and doing good to one's neighbor; so there is no profit in arguing that love alone is sufficient.

2. It is possible for one to be near the kingdom and yet be lost. There is a line of separation between the

kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Until one has crossed that line, which separates the two kingdoms, it matters not how good he may be morally, he remains outside the kingdom and in a lost condition.

3. The faith which does not express itself in obedience to God is the same kind of faith which demons have, and the person who possesses this faith is in no better condition than demons so far as his salvation is concerned.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

Did Jesus announce any new moral principles in his teaching?

In what respect was the teaching of Jesus, with reference to morals, new?

Give Hillel's statement of the principle of our text, and show where the statement of Jesus is superior.

Can you show how our treatment of others determines how we are to be treated?

State and discuss two reasons why we are obligated to follow the rule of our text.

Can you show wherein this rule of conduct is applicable to us?

What practical effect will the adoption of this rule have on a home? Community? Church?

State and discuss four things to do that we may learn how to practice this rule.

Jesus Answers a Question

What do you know about the work of scribes?

Why did the scribes supplant the priests as teachers and interpreters of the law?

With what three separate groups did Jesus have debates?

What commandment did many Jews think to be the greatest commandment of the law?

What is said in our lesson about the unity of God?

What is meant by loving God with all our hearts?

Does loving our neighbor as we love ourselves obligate us to love everybody to the same degree?

Why is love the fulfillment of the law?

Give and discuss some reasons why the command to love God is the greatest commandment of all.

Obligation to God and Others Commended

Define the terms monotheism and polytheism.

What lesson did the Jews learn while in Babylonian captivity?

Can you give some of the teaching of Isaiah on the subject of monotheism?

Does the fact that love is worth more than burnt offerings prove that outward ordinances of religion are to be discontinued?

Give three reasons why love of God and neighbor is worth more than burnt offerings.

Can one love God without expressing that love in obedience?

State and discuss three reasons why this scribe was not far from the kingdom of God.

Faith Without Works

Can you harmonize the teaching of James and Paul on the subject of faith and works?

How does James illustrate the worthlessness of faith without works?

Can you illustrate faith without works as it applies to the alien sinner?

Can you illustrate faith without works as it applies to the child of God?

What is there in lessons to learn which is of interest to you?

Lesson II—January 9, 1955

THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS FAMILY

Lesson Text

Luke 10: 38-42; 2: 51, 52; 2 Tim. 3: 14, 15

38 Now as they went on their way, he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

39 And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at the Lord's feet, and heard his word.

40 But Martha was cumbered about much serving; and she came up to him, and said, Lord, dost thou

not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

41 But the Lord answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things:

42 But one thing is needful: for Mary hath chosen the good part,

which shall not be taken away from her.

51 And he went down with them, and came to Naz'-a-reth; and he was subject unto them: and his mother kept all *these* sayings in her heart.

52 And Je'-sus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

14 But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

15 And that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Je'-sus.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"I will walk within my house with a perfect heart"* (Psalm 101: 2.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Col. 1: 9-18.

Daily Bible Readings

- January 3. M.....Jesus at Home (Luke 2: 40-52)
- January 4. T.....Teaching for the Future (Psalm 78: 1-8)
- January 5. W.....Home Duties (Eph. 6: 1-9)
- January 6. T. Christ's Teaching on Marriage (Matt. 19: 1-9)
- January 7. F.....Training of Children (Deut. 6: 1-9)
- January 8. S.....Timothy's Early Training (2 Tim. 1: 1-7)
- January 9. S.....The Ideal Home (Psalm 101: 1-7)

TIME.—For Luke 2, A.D. 8; for Luke 10, A.D. 28; for 2 Tim., about A.D. 65.
PLACES.—Nazareth, Bethany, and Rome.

PERSONS.—JESUS and his parents, Mary and Martha, Paul and Timothy.

Golden Text Explained

1. **The sources of proper conduct in the home,** (a) Knowledge. People are not born with a knowledge of what is right or wrong. People do not accidentally do right very often. Being thoughtful and considerate of one another, promoting the welfare of each other, and being fair and honest with each other in our daily lives are essential to the operation and maintenance of a well-ordered home. But many of us are so selfish in our natures that it requires an effort for us to live this kind of life. We are so closely and intimately related in the home circle that there is opportunity for irritation and provocation by neglect, as well as thoughtless deeds, so we need to know how to treat each other. Young men and young women marry with little or no teaching as to their duties one toward the other, or how to meet the problems that their association together will create. Parents sometimes neglect to give their children very **positive correlated instructions** as to their responsibilities in the home. It seems that they simply expect the children to catch on by hanging around the home, (b) Love is another source of proper conduct in the home. If it were not for love in the average home, the lack of knowledge of our duties toward one another would likely destroy the home. Love for one another will cause

us to overlook the other's ignorance and selfishness, and many times his meanness; but on the other hand, love will cause each member of the home to be as kind and considerate of every other member of the home as his knowledge will permit. Paul tells us that love is patient, kind, does not envy, does not behave itself unseemly, is unselfish, is not provoked, and does not take account of evil. (1 Cor. 13: 4-6.) So love will cause us to follow that course in the home which contributes to the happiness and welfare and comfort of every other person in the home. And where each member of the home is motivated by love, all the other members of the home are given the proper consideration and treatment, (c) A firm resolution in the heart is a source of proper conduct. As said before, proper conduct is not an accident. It comes about through a knowledge of one's duty and a love for that kind of life plus a firm resolution on our part to maintain that type of conduct. Our golden text is nothing more than David's resolution to walk within his house with a perfect heart. So each one of us should make a firm resolution, with God as our witness, that according to our knowledge we will treat every other member of the home as love prompts us to do.

2. **Areas of proper conduct in the home,** (a) Conjugal. This refers to

the relationship between husband and wife. There is a right and proper course of conduct for husbands and wives to pursue. It is easy for us to be selfish and pursue an improper course of conduct. Paul sums up the matter by saying that the wife should obey and honor the husband in all things, and that the husband should love the wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. (Eph. 5.) A man might pursue the proper course of conduct in all other areas of his life and yet have an unhappy relationship with his wife. The two should both be Christians, they should be devoted to each other, to their children and devoted to the task of making their home thoroughly Christian. (b) Parental. This refers to the conduct of parents toward children. Parents might love each other and yet be thoughtless as to the welfare of their children, and so pursue an improper course in the home. Their duty toward their children may be summed up by saying that they should love their children, being kind toward them and thoughtful of their welfare, never provoking them to wrath; but bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. (Eph. 6: 4.) (c) Filial. This refers to the relationship of the children to the parents. As parents have their duty toward the children, so children have duties toward the parents. They ought to obey their parents; they are to honor father and mother in all things, and when parents are old, they are to care for them in whatever way their parents have need, (d) Fraternal. This has reference to the relationship between brothers and sisters, between children of the same parents. Children need to be taught to love one another and respect each other's rights and to

be thoughtful of the comfort and welfare of each other. Teasing, angry arguments, and fighting among children will not be allowed by thoughtful parents.

3. Blessings of proper conduct in the home, (a) The happiness of the home. Where both the parents and the children pursue the proper course of conduct toward one another as outlined above, the result is always a happy home. People who love one another and are thoughtful for the comfort and welfare of each other are happy regardless of how close and intimate their relationship and association may be. The closeness and intimacy of that relationship contribute to the happiness of those who are completely in love with one another, but the closeness and intimacy of the relationship breeds irritation and unhappiness of people who do not love each other, (b) The children of such a home are blessed throughout life, even after they have left their parents' home. We are told by those who study such problems that the children of a divided home do not have as good chance of making a successful home as the children of a united, happy home have. So if all the people of this generation would walk within their house with a perfect heart, the children who make up the next generation would have a much better opportunity to walk properly in their homes, (c) It is good for the church. A home where all the members pursue the proper course of conduct is a good influence for the church in the community where that home is known and observed. It is impossible for us to measure the good influence of a well-ordered and smoothly-functioning Christian home in the community surrounding it.

Exposition of the Text

I. Putting: First Things First (Luke

10: 38-42)

He entered into a certain village.

Though Luke does not name the city, we learn from John 11: 1 that the home city of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha was Bethany. This city was located about one mile east of the top of the Mount of Olives. It was situated on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho, being near the point where the road begins its steep descent into the Jordan valley. The city is not mentioned in the Old Testament, nor do we learn much

from the New Testament about it. Late in the ministry of our Lord, we find him retiring to this place and to the home of his friends for rest and relaxation.

A certain woman named Martha received him into her house. Of this woman we know but very little. Much has been conjectured by scholars. By some she is thought to have been the wife of Simon the leper, mentioned in Matt. 26: 6 and Mark 14: 3. Since it is said that she received Jesus into her house and since she took the lead in making prepara-

tion⁵ for him, it is supposed that she was older than Mary. But of this we cannot be sure.

She had a sister called Mary. We are told that Mary "sat at the Lord's feet, and heard his word." This gives us some insight into the character of Mary. She recognized in Jesus a great teacher, and found joy in putting herself in the place of a disciple sitting at his feet. Nor was she interested in asking him questions about the many places he visited and the many people he contacted. She was not interested in his experiences in feeding hungry thousands or curing those who were sick and lame. She was interested in hearing from his lips the word of God, as it applied to her in her life. It is one thing for people today to find Bible reading interesting, and quite another thing to find it satisfying to the soul. Some read it and appreciate it as great literature. Others find in it interesting facts about men and nations of the long ago. But he reads with profit who reads to find his duty to God and to his fellow man.

Martha was cumbered about much serving. This statement gives us an insight to Martha's character. Observing the interests and activities of others tells us a lot about their characters. The fact that Jesus spoke of her "much serving" suggests that she was doing more in preparation for her company than was actually necessary. This is one of the nicest faults that many Christian women have. The world has set certain standards of courtesy and hospitality for a hostess to meet, and Christian women sometimes have to neglect some more important matters, the spiritual things of life, in order that they may meet these worldly standards of hospitality. This writer has known of Christian women spending more money than the family budget would allow preparing dinner for preachers. He has known of women staying away from church that they might meet the standards of hospitality to which they were committed!

Bid her therefore that she help me. The fact that Martha asked Jesus to tell Mary to help with the serving indicates that Martha realized that Mary would not heed her request. In Martha we have a good example of two things: (a) Too much worry over material affairs. (b) Fault finding and criticism of those who do

not share our views. And it is not a coincidence that these two things are found in the same woman. They usually go together. Martha not only found fault with her sister, but she seems to think that Jesus did not care that she was left to serve alone. So she even finds fault with the Master.

Thou art anxious and troubled about many things. There are two general interpretations of this and the following verse. Clarke and others see in these statements the following idea: Martha was anxious to prepare many dishes of food, a variety of food for serving the company, but Jesus tells her that even one dish would be sufficient to take care of their physical needs, and if she would do only that which is necessary, she, like Mary, would have time to sit at his feet and listen to his words. Others see in the statements this thought: Martha was anxious and troubled about making material provision for the satisfying of the physical man, but Mary was interested in making provision for the spiritual man. Many things are necessary to the comfort of the physical body, but one thing, the spiritual food, is necessary for the growth and comfort of the spiritual man. Certainly Jesus did not criticize Martha for preparing food for the physical man, but he did criticize her for the extreme anxiety she exercised and her neglect of the spiritual things of life. And from this we can all learn the lesson of putting first things first. The spiritual necessities of life must come first. When we have taken care of those things, we then can take care of the physical necessities to a moderate and necessary extent.

Mary hath chosen the good part. In these words Jesus commends Mary for her evaluation of the material and the spiritual affairs of life. She had put the spiritual things first, and she was not to be denied the enjoyment of those things that she might give her time and her attention to the material affairs of life. Mary was not lazy and unwilling to carry her part in the home. And lazy women who are too slothful and indifferent to keep a clean, neat, orderly home and prepare necessary food for their families and their guests should find no comfort in this scripture. Jesus does not endorse such laziness and unwillingness to accept the responsibilities of a home. Neither does he endorse spending so

much time and effort in keeping a home that the woman has no time for the work and worship of the Lord.

II. Fourfold Growth (Luke 2: 51, 52)

He went down with them, and came to Nazareth. This is said of Jesus following the experience he had in Jerusalem when he was lost from his parents. They found him in the temple, "sitting in the midst of the teachers, both hearing them, and asking them questions." He was surprised that they did not know where to look for him, and said, "Knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" They did not understand his statement, but they insisted on his return with them to their home in Nazareth. In doing so Jesus set an example of obedience to parents which children of all ages and countries should remember.

He was subject unto them. We need to be reminded constantly that Jesus was a human being. He was just as thoroughly and completely human as we are. This does not mean that we doubt his divinity, for he was divine. He was God in the flesh. But emphasizing the divinity of Jesus causes some people to lose sight of his humanity. Whether he realized his own divinity at the age of twelve, we have no way of knowing. But as any other Jewish child, he owed submission to his parents, and he set an example to others by rendering that submission, which every child owes his parents.

His mother kept all these sayings in her heart. What a treasure Mary had in the fond memories of most unusual experiences and statements. She could remember conversations with Gabriel, the arch angel. People spoke by inspiration in her presence of what her child should be and do. She herself had spoken by inspiration of the Lord. She could remember the report of the shepherds that a multitude of angels sang when her son was born. No doubt she spent many happy hours recalling these unusual words and experiences, and putting them together as best she could to determine their meaning to herself and to her son.

Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. Here we have a fourfold development of the Lord, (a) He advanced in wisdom. This refers to the mental growth of Jesus. Being human, he would grow mentally as

any other child grew. There are stories in the apocryphal books of the New Testament which attribute both omniscience and omnipotence to the child Jesus. But they sound unreasonable and unnecessary on their very face. Some take this story of Jesus amazing the teachers in Jerusalem as evidence of his unusual wisdom if not omniscience; but there is no indication that he asked them a question which they were unable to answer, or that he answered any question to which they did not know the answer. It is true that he was able to carry on a conversation with them, which was unusual for a boy of twelve years of age. (b) Jesus grew in stature. This refers to his physical growth. Of course, all are aware of the fact that he grew and developed physically in a very normal sort of way. (c) Jesus grew in favor with God. This we take to mean spiritual growth. Some have had difficulty with the idea that Jesus could grow spiritually, thinking that spiritual growth implies spiritual immaturity or fault at one time in his life. Jesus was never imperfect spiritually. He never made any mistakes spiritually. But the Lord God expected more of him at the age of twenty than he did at the age of ten. And so his spiritual growth kept pace with his mental and physical growth. If he had made no spiritual progress between the ages of twelve and thirty, he would not have been pleasing to his Father. We conclude then that the spiritual growth mentioned in this text is simply that degree of development which Jesus made in his spiritual relationship with his Father which was in harmony with his mental and physical development, (d) He grew in favor with men. This was his social progress. He was human; he was a social being. We come, by birth, into a social environment, and we are obligated to learn certain things about this environment. We are obligated to accept certain duties and responsibilities in this environment. We grow in the acceptance and in the discharge of these social duties and responsibilities. If we make satisfactory progress, we grow in the favor of men. But if we become anti-social and refuse to make progress in these affairs, we lose the favor of men. Sometimes we find ourselves in an environment which demands unchristian activities on our part to gain the favor of that environment. In such

case it is better to fail to grow in favor of men than it is to sacrifice the favor of God and grow in the favor of men. But since we are told that Jesus grew in favor of men, we conclude that it is not wrong for people to desire to gain and enjoy the favor of men.

m. The Place of the Bible in Family Life (2 Tim. 3: 14, 15)

Abide thou in the things which thou hast learned. To abide in the things learned is to continue to practice those things. The need of continuing in such practice is emphasized by the ease with which one may forget such teaching if he does not continue to practice it, and also emphasized by the possibility of being tempted from the right ways.

Knowing of whom thou hast learned them. The word *whom* is plural in the Greek, suggesting that Timothy had more than one teacher on whom he could rely. This no doubt refers to Eunice his mother and Lois his grandmother. (2 Tim. 1: 5.) And of course it would include Paul as his father in the gospel, who had taught him to become a Christian and led him into a fruitful Christian service.

That from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings. From this we are sure that his mother and grandmother are included as among the teachers from whom he had learned the scriptures. We also learn here that it is good to begin teaching your child the scriptures as soon as he is able to understand anything. The word translated babe here is a word which means an infant or a very young child. (Acts 7: 19.) The Jews were commanded to teach the scriptures to their children at all times. (Deut. 6: 6-9.)

Which are able to make thee wise unto salvation. The scriptures referred to in this passage are what we call the Old Testament. Paul says that a knowledge of the Old Testament scriptures will make one wise unto salvation. This does not mean that the plan of salvation is revealed in the Old Testament, as some commentators affirm, but we can learn of the character and the attributes of God. We can learn to fear God, which is the beginning of wisdom and the basis of faith in him and in his Son.

Through faith which is in Christ Jesus. This affirms that salvation is through faith in Christ. The New Testament scriptures are written to give us faith in Christ. (John 20: 30, 31.) No one can have faith in Jesus of Nazareth as Christ the Son of God, if he never reads anything more than the Old Testament. Hence, the New Testament scriptures are necessary that we may have faith in Christ, and that faith necessary that we may be saved. Hence, we learn from this scripture that the Bible has its place in the family. It should be read and believed by the parents. They should teach it to their children that those children might learn to have faith in Christ, that they might exercise that faith in order that they might have the salvation which it offers them in Christ Jesus. Parents who neglect to teach their children the Bible sin against God, and sin grievously against their children. Every home should have a definite program of Bible study for the children, so that their young minds might be filled with holy thoughts and that they might have the examples of holy men and women before them during the formative period of their lives.

Lessons to Learn

1. Feeding the mind is more important than feeding the body. Learning from Christ is worth more than entertaining friends in the home.
2. Jesus sets us an example of complete growth and development. Parents should give their children every opportunity and encouragement to grow as Jesus did.
3. We should continue in the prac-

tice of those things we learn from reliable and inspired sources. And we have the obligation of teaching our children and others as we have opportunity, even as we have been taught by others. To rejoice in the blessings which others have passed on to us without feeling the responsibility of passing these blessings on to others, is to be selfish and prove ourselves undeserving.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?
Repeat the golden text from memory.
Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained
Discuss the need of knowledge as a proper source of conduct in the home.

Discuss the need of love as a proper

source of conduct in the home.
 What does Paul say love will do for us?
 Why is a firm resolution necessary for the proper conduct in the home?
 Can you state briefly what Paul teaches about the proper relationship between husbands and wives?
 What is the course of proper conduct between parents and children?
 What is the proper conduct of children toward their parents?
 What is said about the proper course of conduct between brothers and sisters?
 What effect does the proper conduct of all have on the home?
 What effect does happy home life have on the children?
 How is the church blessed by happy homes?

Putting First Things First

What was the home town of Lazarus and his sisters?
 What do you know of the location of this city?
 What do you know of Martha?
 What do you know of the character of Mary?
 What is the nicest fault some Christian women have?
 Discuss the matter of meeting standards of hospitality which (a) exceed one's financial ability; (b) require time that should be spent in serving God.
 In what two ways is Martha a good example to us?
 Just what did Jesus mean by his criticism of Martha?
 What was the good part which Mary had chosen?

What type of women should find no comfort in this commendation of Mary?

Fourfold Growth

How did Jesus set an example of obedience to parents?
 Should we allow the divinity of Jesus to cause us to think him any less human than we?
 Name some of the things which you think Mary treasured in her heart.
 How did Jesus show unusual wisdom for a boy his age?
 Was Jesus ever spiritually imperfect?
 If he was never spiritually imperfect, how could he grow spiritually?
 What is said in our lesson about growing in favor with men?

The Place of the Bible in Family Life

What is meant by abiding in the things we have learned?
 What emphasizes the importance of continuing in the things we have learned?
 From whom had Timothy learned the things in which he was to continue?
 How early in life should a child begin to learn the teaching of the Bible?
 What do we learn from the Old Testament which makes us wise unto salvation?
 Can one become a believer in Jesus Christ by reading only the Old Testament?
 By way of summary, can you state the place which the Bible should have in every home?
 How serious is the sin of neglecting proper Bible teaching in the home?
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson III—January 16, 1955

HELPING THOSE IN NEED

Lesson Text

Matt. 25: 31-46

31 But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory:

32 And before him shall be gathered all the nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats;

33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

35 For I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in;

36 Naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee

hungry, and fed thee? or athirst, and gave thee drink?

38 And when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

39 And when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, *even* these least, ye did it unto me.

41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels:

42 For I was hungry, and ye did not give me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink;

43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

44 Then shall they also answer, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hun-

gry, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inas-

much as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me.

46 And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith” (Gal. 6: 10.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Isa. 61: 1-11.

Daily Bible Readings

January 10.	M.....	Who Is My Neighbor? (Luke 10: 25-37)
January 11.	T.....	Christ Ministering to Others (John 6: 1-13)
January 12.	W.....	Proper Conduct Required (Lev. 19: 9-17)
January 13.	T.....	Pure Religion (James 1: 19-27)
January 14.	F.....	Mutual Help (1 Cor. 9: 1-12)
January 15.	S.....	The Jerusalem Emergency (Acts 2: 37-41)
January 16.	S.....	Ministering to Saints (2 Cor. 9: 1-5)

TIME.—A.D. 30.

PLACE.—JERUSALEM.

PERSONS.—Jesus and all who read.

Golden Text Explained

1. **Christianity is active.** Our text says, “Let us *work* that which is good.” Christianity is a positive, aggressive religion. It is a religion that works good. Of course, there is a negative side to Christianity. There are things from which a Christian must refrain. He must refrain from evil thoughts, from ugly conversation, and from ungodly deeds. But one cannot afford to be satisfied by meeting the negative requirements of Christianity. One must outline, adopt, and prosecute a positive and aggressive program of activity in order to be a Christian. We cannot think of Jesus as being merely a negative character. Certainly he refrained from evil of every form, but that was the minor side of his life. He was positive and aggressive in his program of goodness. We are told that he began, “both to do and to teach” (Acts 1: 1); and that he “went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him” (Acts 10: 38). Paul directs the activities of Christians in these words, “In diligence not slothful; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing stedfastly in prayer; communicating to the necessities of the saints; given to hospitality. . . . But if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” (Rom. 12: 11-13, 20, 21.)

2. **Opportunities determine responsibilities.** Our text says that we are to work that which is good as we have opportunity. James tells us that, if we know to do good and do it not, it is sin. (James 4: 17.) Knowing to do good in this verse suggests that we have an opportunity to do good. So if we neglect our opportunities, or refuse to use them, we commit a sin. Some refuse to use the opportunity to do good because they are afraid they will make a mistake, but being afraid of making a mistake does not excuse one in the sight of the Lord from making the effort. It is better in the sight of God to try and fail than it is to be a coward and fail. Others refuse to use their opportunities to do good in order to avoid ridicule for taking a part publicly in such activities, while others neglect to use their opportunities simply because they do not care to be bothered with such affairs, or because they enjoy doing other things more. But regardless of the reason why a person does not use his opportunities to do good, it is still a sin to neglect or refuse to use those opportunities.

3. **Objects of our good works.** Paul tells us that all men are the objects of our good works. There are none so poor and insignificant as to be beneath our notice. Many churches of today are inclined to leave the very poorest of the poor to the Salvation Army and to other organizations which make it their business to appeal to such classes. This is a mis-

take because it deprives us of the opportunity of reaching that class of people with the gospel. If we allow the Salvation Army and other religious organizations to feed them and clothe them, they will turn to these same religious organizations for their religious instruction. So by our neglect of them, we force them to look to false teachers for their religious leadership. But Paul tells us that the household of the faith is our special object of good works. By the term, "household of the faith," he means the family of God. The word household means family and the term, the faith, refers to the gospel of Christ. Hence, the term, "household of the faith," simply means the family of God, composed of all who have obeyed the faith. The church at Jerusalem gives us a good example of caring for those of the household of faith in its care for the Grecian widows. (Acts 6: 1-6.) Then if great areas are hurt by storms or famines, we have the example of the churches of Macedonia and Achaia, cooperating to send relief by the hands of Paul and his helpers. (2 Cor. 8, 9.) We also have the example of the church at Antioch sending relief to the disciples in Judea. (Acts 11: 27-30.)

4. **Reasons for good works.** (a) The Lord commands them. Paul gave order to the churches in Galatia to lay by in store on the first day of the week that they might have money to care for the poor. (1 Cor. 16: 1, 2.) Our text has all the force of a command to engage in good works. And Paul commands us to communicate to the necessities of the saints. (Rom. 12: 13a.) (b) Growing into the likeness of Christ demands good works. No one can hope

to be like Christ who refuses to be moved with compassion by the needs of the poor and who does not let this feeling of compassion cause him to do something to relieve their necessities. (c) Happiness requires caring for the poor. First, our own happiness depends on helping those who are in need. No one can be truly happy when he must remember the cries of hungry children, the look of disappointment on the faces of the hungry and those who are in destitute circumstances. But genuine happiness comes from a realization that we have done what we can to make the lot of others more tolerable. Not only does our happiness depend upon that, but the happiness of others, those who are in need, depends upon our doing good works. It is impossible for children to be happy while constantly conscious of a gnawing pain of hunger. A reasonable amount of food and warm clothing can relieve their hunger, warm their bodies, and make their hearts glad, (d) Our welfare in the judgment requires it. Mercy and pity will move us to feed the hungry. But if we show no mercy here, we are told that we will not be shown mercy in the judgment. (James 2: 13.) And our lesson text for today shows us, if we refuse or neglect to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, that the Lord will put us on the left side in judgment with all the wicked of the earth, and we will be sent into eternal punishment. You remember that the one-talent man was cast out in the day of judgment, not because he had done wickedly, but because he had refused to accept the opportunities and responsibilities for doing good.

Exposition of the Text

I. Gathering in the Judgment (Matt. 25: 31-33)

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, (a) This could not refer to his first coming when he was here on earth as a man, for that was referred to as his humiliation, instead of his glory, (b) This coming of our text could not be his coming in his kingdom, for he said, "Verily I say unto you, There are some of them that stand here, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." (Matt. 16: 28.) So the coming of Christ in his kingdom

was during the lifetime of some of his apostles. (c) The coming of Christ in glory is to be accompanied with the judgment. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds." (Matt. 16: 27.) This coming of our text is followed immediately by the separation of the wicked from the righteous and rendering to both the wicked and the righteous according to their deeds. Hence, this is his coming in glory, the second coming toward which all of us look.

Then shall he sit on the throne of his glory. There are some among us who think this should read, then shall he *begin* to sit on the throne of his glory. Jesus prayed the Father that he might be glorified with the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. (John 17: 5.) In John 7: 39 we learn that the Spirit could not come until Jesus was glorified. The Spirit came on Pentecost (Acts 2: 1-4), so Jesus was glorified at the time of the coming of the Spirit on Pentecost. Peter tells us that Jesus was exalted, which is a part of his glorification, at the right hand of God, by being seated on the throne of David. (Acts 2: 29-36.) So Jesus will not, at his second coming, begin to sit on the throne of his glory, but he will be sitting on the throne of his glory when he comes to judge all nations.

Before him shall be gathered all the nations. Again, some brethren have trouble with the term, *all the nations*. They think that simply means those nations which are in existence at the time of the second coming of Christ. But in Matt. 11: 20-24 we learn that it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for the people of Bethsaida, who lived in the time of Christ. From this statement we learn that the people of Tyre and Sidon, which were destroyed in about A.D. 330, will be in the judgment, "in the day of judgment," with the people who lived in Bethsaida in the time of Christ, about A.D. 30. Then he says that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for the people of Capernaum. Here we have another nation from another generation mentioned as being in the judgment with the people of Tyre and Sidon and Bethsaida. Then again in Matt. 12: 38-42 we are told that the men of Nineveh will stand up in the judgment with the generation to which Jesus talked, and shall condemn that generation. So again we have another nation and another generation that will be in the judgment with the people of the time of Jesus. And again he says the queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment and condemn it. Here we have another nation and another generation that will be in the judgment. Now summing up, we have the people of Tyre and Sidon, more than 300 years before Christ; the people of Sodom, more than 1900 years before Christ;

the men of Nineveh, more than 800 years before Christ; and the queen of the south, more than a 1000 years before Christ, all in the judgment, "in the day of judgment," with the generation to which Jesus taught. Added to this we have both the wicked and the righteous of Thessalonica in the judgment at the time the Lord comes from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel. (2 Thess. 1: 7-10.) Here we have six different nations in six different generations which will be in the judgment at the time the Lord comes to reward the faithful and punish the wicked. If these six nations, scattered over more than a thousand years of time, will be in the judgment, who can doubt that the term "all nations" in our text means anything other than all the nations of the world that have ever lived or will ever live from now until the time of the end.

He shall separate them one from another. In his parables Jesus taught that the end of the world is the time of separation. The tares were to be allowed to grow with the wheat until the harvest, then they would be separated. (Matt. 13: 37-42.) And the parable of the net teaches the same lesson. (Matt. 13: 47-50.)

The sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. The right hand is an expression meaning acceptance, honor, and exaltation. The righteous are referred to as sheep because of their innocence and harmlessness; while the wicked are referred to as goats because of their lack of innocence and harmlessness. The left hand was considered a place of dishonor, as compared to the right, and denotes disapproval and rejection.

II. Helpers of the Needy Are Blessed

(Matt. 25: 34-40)

Come, ye blessed of my Father. This is the Saviour's welcome to those who have loved and served him here on earth. We notice that the blessing of the righteous is primarily from God the Father. Our blessings come from him through Christ. The blessing here mentioned is eternal life. (Rom. 6: 23.)

Inherit the kingdom prepared for you. Heaven, the home of the righteous, is spoken of here as a kingdom. And Peter calls it the everlasting kingdom. (2 Pet. 1: 11.) This is not to be confused with the

mediatorial kingdom over which Jesus now reigns as king. In that kingdom Paul says that the Father will be over all, even the Son himself will be subjected to the Father. And the kingdom over which the Son now reigns will be delivered up to God the Father. (1 Cor. 15: 24-28.)

From the foundation of the world. From Luke 11: 50, 51 we learn that the foundation of the world means the beginning of the world. So it has been in the eternal purpose of God to give the righteous a place of rest and peace for all eternity. Paul speaks of God's grace as given to us "in Christ Jesus before times eternal, but hath now been manifested by the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. 1: 9, 10.) The prophet tells us that God knows and declares the end from the beginning, and that as he hath purposed he will also do. (Isa. 46: 10, 11.) Let us not think that God has stumbled along in his dealings with men by the trial and error method, changing his plans from time to time, to see if something else will work better. God works with humanity according to a purpose which he made before the world was created. God knew the end from the beginning and will carry out his purposes according to his eternal plans regardless of what we as individuals may think or do about it.

I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat. Our Lord enumerates six good things here which the righteous had done. They had fed the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, taken in the stranger, clothed the naked, visited the sick, and had been thoughtful of those in prison for the sake of Christ and the gospel. We are not to conclude that these are the only conditions of eternal salvation. Neither are we to conclude that all people who do these things will be classed as sheep in the judgment. The new birth, the birth of water and the Spirit, is not mentioned as being one of the things which these people did. We all realize that the new birth is essential to eternal salvation. Worship of God in prayer, in song, and in taking the Lord's supper is not mentioned in the enumeration of the things which characterized the righteous. Yet, all recognize the worship of God as being essential to our eternal salvation. Neither the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5: 22, 23) nor the Christian graces (2 Pet. 1: 5-11) are mentioned in this list of things which characterize the

righteous, and yet Peter specifically says that the Christian graces are necessary for an entrance "into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." So we conclude that Jesus picked out a few of the practical things of Christianity, things which spring from a Christ-like heart, and taught us that if we do these things, as children of God, we will be blessed; but if, as children of God, we fail to do such things, we will be punished. The attention of the reader is called especially to the word *for* in verse 35. Jesus says that these on the right hand are to inherit the kingdom prepared for them, *for* they did the things which he then enumerates. From this we learn that our eternal salvation is conditioned upon doing things which the Lord commands us to do. This agrees with Paul's statement that Jesus is the author of eternal salvation unto all that obey him. (Heb. 5: 9.)

I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink. We call your attention to this to impress you with the idea that the little, insignificant things of life may determine our destiny. Jesus said those who would give a cup of cold water to his little ones should in no wise lose their reward. (Matt. 10: 42.) People who are waiting for an opportunity to do big things will likely never get to heaven. The Lord gives opportunities for big things to those who have done well the little things of life. One who is not willing to do the little things is not fit to do the big things.

I was in prison, and ye came unto me. While it is good to visit jails and prisons to preach the gospel to inmates, that is not doing the thing which here the Lord commends. Those who go to prison for foul crimes committed do not represent the Lord. And one is not visiting the Lord when he visits a person of that kind. This refers to people who were in prison for the sake of Christ and the gospel.

Lord, when saw we thee hungry? Are we to understand by this that the righteous in judgment will not know this great principle of serving Christ in the needy? It is hardly possible that Christian people can go through life, reading their Bibles as they should, without learning the fact that serving the needy is serving Christ. But Jesus so identifies himself with the poor and needy that he counts an act of mercy done to them an act done to his own person, and an of-

fense or insult offered to the weak and the erring is an act of insult or offense offered to him. (1 Cor. 8: 12.) We rather take this as a statement expressive of their deep humility and their unworthiness to serve such a person as he.

Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren. Notice the infinite condescension of our Lord. He is willing to be identified with the very least of his brethren. His brethren are those who do the commandments of the Father. (Matt. 12: 50.) Some think that our brethren here include all sufferers and all who need our help, and certainly the Lord will bless his children for serving those who are not of the household of faith as well as he will those who are of the household of faith. We sometimes lament the fact that we did not live in the time of our Lord, and so had no opportunity to see him, be associated with him, and serve him. But by the exercise of faith we may serve him in the hungry, the sick, the sorrowing, and the suffering. And the rewards for serving him in these poor and needy people are just as great as the rewards will be to those who actually relieved his hunger and his suffering while he was here in person. So we are none the losers so far as rewards is concerned by the fact that we did not live in the time our Lord was on earth.

III. The Selfish Are Punished (Matt. 25: 41-46)

Depart from me, ye cursed. Those who think that Jesus is characterized by nothing except mercy and forbearance and leniency and forgiveness will do well to ponder this statement. And Paul says that when he comes again he will come to take vengeance on those who know not God and who obey not the gospel. (2 Thess. 1: 6, 7.) Again we read, "Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense. And again, the Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. 10: 30, 31.)

Prepared for the devil and his angels. Heaven is prepared for the righteous, and hell is prepared for the devil and his angels. The ungodly are not fit for heaven and, having allied themselves with the devil during this life, they are fit for no other place than that which was prepared for the devil. Some have trouble in reconciling this treatment

of the ungodly with the teaching of the Bible concerning the mercy, the goodness, the patience, and the long-suffering of God. But it should be remembered that God is merciful, patient, and longsuffering during the day of salvation; but when the day of salvation is over and the door of mercy has been closed, God is pictured, not as being merciful and longsuffering, but as taking vengeance on those who rejected and despised him. Hence, we see both the goodness and the severity of God. (Rom. 11: 22.) Those who despise his goodness and presume upon his mercy will have to endure his severity.

For I was hungry, and ye did not give me to eat. Again, we call attention to this little word *for* as showing that these were consigned to eternal fire because they had failed to do that which the Lord expected of them. Hence, the way we live on this earth, whether we serve Christ in the person of the poor and the needy, determines where we will spend eternity. While it is certainly true that all nations will be in this judgment scene, and every individual who has lived or ever will live will be in this one great congregation; yet, in this paragraph our Lord deals only with his blood-bought servants, the children of God. Certainly it is not the duty of the children of the devil to feed the hungry, to visit the sick and those who are in prison. Paul says that he was free in regard to righteousness while he was a servant of sin. (Rom. 6: 20.) The Lord is not going to send any child of the devil to hell because that child of the devil did not feed the hungry and visit the sick. Children of the devil will be sent to hell simply because they are the children of the devil and preferred to be that rather than to be children of God. But those servants of the Lord, children of God, who enjoy the blessings and privileges of Christianity, but refuse to accept the responsibilities of Christianity and help those who are poor and needy, are the ones here under consideration. They are the ones who will be sent to torment because they did not feed the hungry and visit the sick. So we have a positive unanswerable argument in proof of the fact that a child of God can so conduct himself as to be lost in hell.

These shall go away into eternal punishment. A lot of people would like to read hell fire and eternal pun-

ishment clear out of the Bible. Some wish to read all punishment out of the Bible. Others would like to think that the wicked are immediately annihilated and not consigned to eternal suffering. Only those who are conscious can be punished. You may *abuse* an unconscious body, but you cannot *punish* an unconscious body. If the punishment is eternal, the consciousness must be eternal. We should notice also that the punishment is described as to its duration by the same word that the duration of life is described. If the life is eternal, the punishment must be eternal. All agree that the life of the righteous is to be eternal.

Therefore, the punishment of the wicked must be eternal. Paul says that the Lord will render to every man according to his works: "To them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and incorruption, eternal life: but unto them that are factious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, shall be wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that worketh evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Greek; but glory and honor and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek: for there is no respect of persons with God." (Rom. 2: 7-11.)

Lessons to Learn

1. Jesus is coming again. He has some unfinished business with the people of this earth. He will come to raise them from the dead and to reward them for their works.

2. The Lord is merciful and long-suffering, patient and forgiving toward mankind during this day of salvation, and all who accept him and

serve him to the extent of their ability need not fear what the day of judgment will bring.

3. The Lord is represented as being as fearful and severe in judgment as he is merciful and patient during the day of salvation. Those who despise and reject his mercy here will have cause to regret and bewail it in the day of judgment.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

From what three things does Christianity demand that we refrain?

Discuss the necessity for a positive side of Christianity.

How did Jesus set an example of the positive side?

What did Paul teach as to the requirements of a positive program of Christianity?

What does opportunity have to do with our responsibility?

What fears often keep people from accepting responsibility?

What is the danger of neglecting to care for the poor?

For what group is the church especially obligated to care?

What church gives us a good example of taking care of this group?

What examples do we have of taking care of those in disaster areas?

State and discuss four reasons for doing good works.

Gathering in the Judgment

To what coming of Christ does our text not refer?

How do you know that the coming of Christ in our text is his "coming in glory"?

Does our text teach that Jesus will begin to sit on the throne of his glory at his second coming?

When was Jesus glorified?

When did Jesus begin to sit on the throne of his glory?

Name several nations which will be in

the judgment at the same time.

What light does this throw on the subject of all nations being in the judgment at the same time?

What parables teach separation of the good and the bad at the time of the end?

What is the significance of the right hand and the left hand in our text?

Helpers of the Needy Are Blessed

From whom and through whom do all our blessings come?

What do you know of the kingdom which the righteous are to inherit?

What is meant by the term "foundation of the world"?

What is suggested here with reference to God's eternal purpose?

Are all the conditions of eternal salvation mentioned in our text?

Name some conditions of eternal salvation which are not mentioned in our text.

What proof do we have in our text that obedience is an essential condition of eternal salvation?

What proof do we have in our text that little, insignificant things determine our eternal destiny?

Does our text teach the necessity of visiting criminals in jail?

Are we at a disadvantage in serving Christ because we did not live while he was on earth?

The Selfish Are Punished

Is punishment of the wicked contrary to the nature of Jesus?

For whom was hell prepared?

Can you prove by the use of this text that children of God can so conduct themselves as to be lost in hell?

What is the difference between abuse punished forever?
and punishment?
Can you prove that the wicked will be sons to learn?

What is there of interest to you in les-

Lesson IV—January 23, 1955

THE CHRISTIAN IN THE INDUSTRIAL WORLD

Lesson Text

Deut. 24: 14, 15; Eph. 6: 5-9; 1 Tim. 6: 17-19

14 Thou shalt not oppress a hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy sojourners that are in thy land within thy gates:

15 In his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it (for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it); lest he cry against thee unto Je-ho-vah, and it be sin unto thee.

5 Servants, be obedient unto them that according to the flesh are your masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

6 Not in the way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

7 With good will doing service, as unto the Lord, and not unto men:

8 Knowing that whatsoever good

thing each one doeth, the same shall he receive again from the Lord, whether *he be* bond or free.

9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, and forbear threatening: knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no respect of persons with him.

17 Charge them that are rich in this present world, that they be not highminded, nor have their hope set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

19 Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the life which is *life* indeed.

Golden Text—"Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise." (Prov. 6: 6.)

Devotional Reading.—Mark 6: 1-3; Prov. 6: 6-12.

Daily Bible Readings

- January 17. M..... Religion in Business (Deut. 24: 10-18)
- January 18. T..... Profit in Labor (Prov. 14: 15-23)
- January 19. W..... Pleasing Our Common Master (Eph. 6: 1-9)
- January 20. T..... Working with Our Hands (1 Cor. 4: 6-13)
- January 21. F..... Lessons for a Sluggard (Prov. 6: 6-19)
- January 22. S..... Standards of Conduct (Deut. 5: 12-20)
- January 23. S..... Labor to Support the Gospel (Gal. 6: 6-10)

Time.—For Deuteronomy 1451 B.C.; for Ephesians A.D. 63; for First Timothy A.D. 65.

Places.—For Deuteronomy, somewhere east of the Jordan; for Ephesians in the prison at Rome; for First Timothy somewhere in Macedonia.

Persons.—The writers are Moses and Paul. The people addressed are Israel, the church at Ephesus, and Timothy.

Golden Text Explained

1. We can learn industry from the ant. Work has always been a necessary and ennobling activity. When God created man and placed him in the garden, he gave him a job of work to do, dressing and keeping the garden. Jesus said, "My Father worketh even until now, and I work." (John 5: 17.) No man ever more

completely filled his day with arduous toil than did our Lord. Paul was a hard worker, and he taught others to mind their own business, to work with their own hands, that they might walk becomingly toward them that are without and that they might have need of nothing. (1 Thess. 4: 11, 12.) He said that he labored constantly,

working night and day, that he might not be a burden to the churches for which he labored and said, "If any will not work, neither let him eat." (2 Thess. 3: 8-10.) Solomon used the ant to teach us some lessons about industry. (a) We should work in spite of the fact that we have little ability. The ant is a little creature, but he does not depend upon others for his keep simply because he is smaller than others. The ant does not look at a pile of grain and decide that, since he cannot carry it all at one load, he will not do anything. There are some people who are discouraged because the job looks too big for them to do in the first five or ten minutes, (b) We can learn a lesson of work in the face of discouragement. When ants have built their mound, an animal or a man comes along and steps in it, destroying hundreds of their lives, and wrecking their city, but they do not become discouraged and quit. They begin immediately to rebuild and their work does not cease until they have accomplished their purpose, (c) We can learn the lesson of persevering from the ant. If the job is too big to be done in a day, they do not become discouraged and quit. The ant is an outstanding example of perseverance until the job is completed.

2. **We can learn cooperation from the ant.** (a) The size of the ant often forces him to seek cooperation from others. If one cannot get the job done, another comes to his rescue. If two are not big enough to do the job, others come. They continue to come until there are enough to do the job. But it is also noticeable that a hundred of them do not work where ten could as easily and as efficiently do the job. They cooperate but they do not waste time and effort. So we can learn a lesson of cooperation from these little fellows. When a job is too big for one individual, others can help. When an undertaking is too large for one congregation to accomplish, others can cooperate. But as the ant does not go in for high-powered organization, "having no chief, overseer, or ruler," so congregations must not go in for high-powered organization that would destroy the autonomy of the local church. Local churches can cooperate, but they dare not form ecclesiastical organizations which would bring them into bondage, (b) These ants cooperate without taskmasters or overseers. (Prov. 6: 7.) The

thought here is that they do their work and cooperate with one another without being forced by rulers to do so. (c) We can learn the lesson of harmonious cooperation from the ants. Ants of differing varieties may fight, but ants in the same hill do not waste their time and energy fighting each other. Children of God should learn that it is not only un-Christlike, but a waste of time and energy, for them to fight among themselves.

3. **We can learn to provide for the future.** Some have been critical of Solomon for saying that the ant provides her bread in the summer that she may consume it in the winter. The truth is, Solomon did not say that she consumes it in the winter. Many ants hibernate and sleep through the winter; and because this is true, and because someone read carelessly, he thought that Solomon made a mistake. However, there are certain types of ants in certain climates that do not sleep through the winter. An authority on such matters tells us that there is an ant in the vicinity of the Dead Sea which, in January, is actively engaged in collecting, "the aphides and saccharine exudations from the trees that grow in that section. These species are spread along the whole of the Mediterranean coasts, but are unknown in more northern climates. Hence, writers who were ignorant of ants beyond those of their own countries have been presumptuous enough to deny the accuracy of Solomon's statement." (a) We should learn to provide for our material needs. Many a lazy good-for-nothing man spends all his time having a good time, loafing and doing nothing, and then when the cold winter arrives, he wants someone else to feed, clothe, and shelter his family. The worthy woman is praised because she is not afraid of work, and she makes provision for those of her household. (Prov. 31: 10-31.) (b) We should also learn the lesson of making provisions for our spiritual welfare in the future. Jesus teaches us this lesson in the parable of the unrighteous steward who looked to the future and used his job and his opportunity to provide for his future welfare. (Luke 16: 1-9.)

4. **We can learn respect for little things.** "Of late the doings of the ant have been very carefully looked into, and very wonderful facts have come to life. Among ants there are engineers, constructing elaborate tun-

nels and carrying on complicated building operations; stock keepers, guarding and feeding the aphids, like a cow, for the juice they extract from them; agriculturists, carefully clearing ground of all weeds, in order to let only certain grasses grow within the prepared area, and storing up corn underground, which by a marvelous instinct they first kill so as to prevent it from germinating; slaveholders, who attacked tribes of black ants, carrying off the young and keep these to wait on them and feed them,

becoming meanwhile so helpless and absolutely unable to feed themselves, and dying of starvation when deprived of the help of their slaves; and some so far imitating our habits as to keep pet insects—insects which they feed and attend to but which apparently rendered them no service. As we look at the diminutive ant, we may well wonder 'that one little head could carry all he knew.' We must not mistake bigness for greatness." (Pulpit Commentary.)

Exposition of the Text

I. Proper Treatment of the Poor

(Deut. 24: 14, 15)

Thou shalt not oppress a hired servant that is poor and needy. It is very difficult for those who are rich to be as considerate of, and as kind to, the poor as they should be. So in all ages God has championed the cause of the poor and has been the friend of the poor. He has warned the rich to be thoughtful of the welfare of the poor and has threatened punishment if they neglect the poor. Within the memory of some now living capital oppressed labor and made their lot very hard. Labor unions sprang into existence in order that, through cooperation, the laborer might protect himself against the greed, avarice, and unjust treatment of capital. It now looks as if labor will abuse its privileges and power and be as thoughtless of the rights and the welfare of capital as capital was once thoughtless of the rights and welfare of labor. The rich are dependent upon the poor and capital is dependent upon labor. The rich can no more do without the poor than the poor can do without the rich. So the rich are really indebted to the poor. Capital is indebted to labor. For either to mistreat or destroy the other is unwise, unrighteous, and hurtful to the one who does the destructive work. So the Lord has always taught the poor and those dependent upon wages to give an honest day's work and has always taught the rich, those who do the hiring, to pay a fair day's wage and to be prompt about it.

Whether he be of thy brethren.

God made no distinction between the Jews and the sojourners so far as their treatment was concerned at the hands of the rich. God had long-range reasons for keeping the Jews separate from the people among

whom they lived. But he did not endorse the idea of a superior race, though the Jews themselves felt superior to the nations round about them and often made the discrimination in their manner of treatment. Yet God forbade that they should oppress even a Canaanite.

In his day thou shalt give him his hire. The first statement of this law reads, "Thou shalt not oppress thy neighbor, nor rob him: the wages of a hired servant shall not abide with thee all night until the morning." (Lev. 19: 13.) It is difficult for us in our economy to see why a servant should be paid at the end of a day, but in the day when this law was given, and people had only one day's store of food in the house, a family could easily go hungry if the wage earner was not paid at the end of the day. Our text says that the employer was not to allow the sun to go down without having paid his servants. In one of the parables of our Lord, this practice is seen to be common. When a householder had sent men into a field to work for him, some of them not being hired until the eleventh hour, we are told, "And when even was come, the lord of the vineyard said unto his steward, Call the laborers, and pay them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first." (Matt. 20: 1-8.) It is distinctly said that the employer paid them "when even was come."

Lest he cry against thee unto Jehovah, and it be sin unto thee. If, through negligence or lack of concern for the condition of the poor, an employer should refuse to pay his laborers, and they or their family suffered from hunger, the employer was held responsible for it, and God would not overlook such cold indifference toward the poor. For David says, "I know that Jehovah will main-

tain the cause of the afflicted, and justice for the needy." (Psalm 140:

12.) Again David says, "For he will stand at the right hand of the needy, to save him from them that judge his soul." (Psalm 109: 31.) And Solomon says, "Rob not the poor, because he is poor; neither oppress the afflicted in the gate: for Jehovah will plead their cause, and despoil of life those that despoil them." (Prov. 22: 22.) In our text Moses distinctly says that any mistreatment of the poor at the hands of the rich or the employer is a "sin unto thee." God was interested in the welfare of the poor and the needy and counted it a sin on the part of those who were not so interested as to discharge their obligations to them promptly.

II. Proper Relationship between Masters and Servants (Eph. 6: 5-9)

Servants, be obedient. This word *servant* is from a Greek word which means bondservants or slaves. The Lord recognized the existing social, economic, and political conditions into which his church was introduced. He did not make and enforce such laws upon his disciples, as would unduly disturb the social and economic conditions of the country into which the church was carried. Undoubtedly slavery is wrong. It is wrong for one man to own another, to buy, sell, traffic, in human beings as if they were chattel; it is a violation of the spirit of brotherly love and Christian equality which is so obvious in the new covenant. The Lord could have commanded masters to free all their slaves in order to become Christians and to live the Christian life acceptably. He could also have demanded that slaves desert their masters and refuse to be in bondage in order to live the Christian life. But our Lord does very few things in a rough and abrupt manner. Instead of making his church responsible for a violent social and economic revolution, he preferred to raise people above the level of slavery through a process of teaching. So he told servants to be obedient to their masters, and commanded that the masters be kind and gentle in the treatment of their slaves.

With fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart. This does not mean "slavish dread, but great moral anxiety lest one should fail in duty." The expression "singleness of your heart" is explained by the statement

which follows: "Not in the way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." They were given to understand that, when they served their masters well, they were doing the will of God.

With good will doing service, as unto the Lord, and not unto men. In this statement Paul continues the thought of the preceding verse, indicating that their service is to be done in the spirit of good will, as if they were actually serving the Lord, and not rendering service to men. Doing their work from the heart and doing it with good will would make it easy for them to render sincere service and not eyeservice. Employees today would do well to take this teaching to heart. Though they are not slaves of the employer, yet the principle in this teaching applies to employees. They are not to render eyeservice as men pleasers. They are not to be clock watchers, giving only that amount of service which is absolutely required of them in order to draw their pay; but they are to serve their employer's best interests. They are to serve their employer as if they were rendering that service unto the Lord. One who well serves his employer pleases the Lord. One who cheats the employer is cheating the Lord. One who produces only half as much for his employer as he is reasonably capable of producing has cheated his employer, and he who cheats the employer has not served as if he were serving the Lord.

Shall he receive again from the Lord. Paul is saying to the servant that whatsoever good ones does he shall receive from the Lord. That is, he shall receive a reward from the Lord for the good service that he renders. Slaves received no pay for their labors. They were given the necessities of life. But Paul encouraged them to render fair service to their masters and expect a reward in the next life. But there is a principle here for the employee of today; if he serves his employer well, the Lord will take notice of it and reward him for it. But if he is lazy and indifferent toward his employer's welfare, if he cheats by producing less than he is capable of doing, he will be rewarded according to his labors. A child of God could be so unfaithful, disloyal, and dishonest in his dealings with his employer as to be lost.

Ye masters, do the same things

unto them. The Lord cannot be accused of being unfair, either to capital or to labor. He gives directions to servants to be obedient and to render faithful, loyal service, and then he gives instructions to the masters to have the same attitude toward the servants. "He had required servants to act conscientiously; to remember that the eye of God was upon them, and that in that condition in life they were to regard themselves as serving God and as mainly answerable to him. The same things the apostles would have masters feel. They were to be faithful, conscientious, just, true to the interests of their servants, and to remember that they were responsible to God." (Barnes.)

And forbear threatening. The use of physical force to gain one's objective is un-Christian. The Lord does not resort to force to get people to be on his side in this fight of right against wrong. He will not allow masters to use force in their dealings with their servants.

There is no respect of persons with him. Paul reminds these masters that they have a master in heaven, and their master is no respecter of persons. From where our Lord looks down, a master does not look any better than a slave. The capitalist does not look any better or bigger than the man in the laborer's uniform. So God will punish the master, the capitalist, for mistreating his slave or employee just as severely as he would punish a slave or an employee for not rendering due service to his master or employer.

III. Good Advice to the Rich (1 Tim. 6: 17-19)

Charge them that are rich in this present world. The first thing that we notice about this is that there were rich people in the church in the time of Paul. The Lord did not compel rich people to get rid of all their wealth and distribute it among those who were poor. There was a group in the church at Jerusalem who sold their property and made the money available to the apostles to care for those who were in need. But not all the members of the Jerusalem church participated in that venture in community living. Peter told Ananias that, while his property remained in his possession, he could have kept it if he so desired; and after he had sold the property, the money was in his possession, and he

could do with it as he so desired. He did not have to give the money to the apostles to use for the relief of the poor. (Acts 5: 4.) However, Jesus taught that it is extremely difficult for a rich man to go to heaven. It is as difficult as it is for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. (Matt. 19: 23-26.) On account of this difficulty, Paul felt it necessary to charge the rich brethren that they be careful in the use of their wealth.

Be not highminded. There are four charges which Paul gives to the rich; two of them negative and two of them positive. Highmindedness is the first of the negative charges. People who have considerable wealth find it difficult to keep from feeling superior to those who are poor. But Paul tells us that none of us brought anything into this world, nor can we carry anything out with us. So having food and covering we should be therewith content. (1 Tim. 6: 7, 8.)

Nor have their hopes set on the uncertainty of riches. This is the second negative charge which Paul would have Timothy give to the rich. Paul characterizes riches as uncertain, and since men can lose a fortune overnight in many kinds of investments, riches certainly deserve this description.

But on God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy. People are not to set their hopes on riches which are uncertain, but they are to set their hopes on God, who is neither uncertain nor stingy in his dealings with us. God promises that we shall have all we need if we put him and his kingdom first. That promise is more dependable than a great bank account, or wealth in any of its many forms. We are to trust in the Giver and not in the gift. And he who puts his trust in the gift must forfeit his hold upon the Giver.

That they do good. This is the second positive charge that Paul would have Timothy give the rich; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate. They are to do good to all men as they have opportunity and as their wealth enables them. They are to be rich in good works instead of being idle as their wealth will allow them to be. They are to be ready to distribute rather than to hoard their wealth. They should realize that God has given them their wealth and that he expects them to act as a distributing agent

thereof. Willing to communicate simply means that they should be willing to share their wealth with others who are less fortunate than they.

Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come. This simply means that, by using their wealth in such way as they are charged to do, they will do that which contributes to their eternal happiness. Jesus teaches us that we are to use the mammon of unrighteousness, that when it fails we shall be received into the eternal

tabernacles. (Luke 16: 9.) And in the story of the rich man and Lazarus Jesus teaches us that the way we use our material wealth may determine where we will spend eternity. And Paul closes this lesson with this statement. "That they may lay hold on the life which is life indeed." By this he simply means that, if the rich will put their trust in God, if they will do good with their wealth, if they will distribute it and share it with others, they will, by this manner of life, lay hold on eternal life.

Lessons to Learn

1. The Lord has this to say about those who deal unjustly with their laborers: "Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver are rusted; and their rust shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh as fire. Ye have laid up your treasures in the last days. Behold, the hire of the laborers who mowed your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth out: and the cries of them that reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." (Jas. 5: 2-4.) It is comforting to

know that God is the friend of those who are mistreated here and that he will cure and make up for these inequities in the life to come.

2. Though it is difficult for the rich to enter into heaven, they may do so by following the instructions of the Lord. However, if they follow his instructions they may not die in wealth. However, if we amass a fortune and leave it behind, we cannot know whether we have left it to a wise man or a fool. (Eccles. 2: 18, 19.)

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

What evidence do we have in our lesson that work is an ennobling activity?

What do we learn from the ant about work according to our ability?

What do we learn from the ant about working in the face of discouragement?

What do we learn about perseverance?

What do we learn from the ant about co-operation in work?

What should churches learn from the ant about super organizations in work?

Do all ants work in the summer and sleep through the winter?

What do we learn from the ant about providing for our future material needs?

May we learn about providing for our spiritual future?

What have you learned from this lesson to give you respect for little things?

Improper Treatment of the Poor

Who has been the friend of the poor in all ages?

Why do rich people find it difficult to be considerate of poor people?

In what way are the rich indebted to the poor? and capital indebted to labor?

Is there a possibility of labor oppressing capital as capital once oppressed labor?

Did God allow his people to oppress strangers who lived among them?

When was the employee entitled to pay for his work?

What New Testament parable emphasizes the custom of paying at the end of the day?

How serious was the employer's failure to pay the worker at the end of the day?

Proper Relationship Between Masters and Servants

What is the meaning of the word servant in our text?

Is slavery as was practiced in the United States right or wrong?

If slavery is wrong, why did not the Lord forbid it?

What is meant by serving in singleness of heart?

If one serves his employer as he would serve the Lord, what effect would this have on the amount the employee produces?

What does the service which an employee renders an employer have to do with one's standing in the judgment?

What instruction does Paul give to masters and employers?

What general principle does Paul use to enforce his teaching on both masters and slaves, employers and employees?

Good Advice to the Rich

Can one be a Christian and retain his riches?

What did Jesus say as to the difficulty of a rich man going to heaven?

What is highmindedness and why should the rich avoid it?

Why are riches described as being uncertain?

What is our advantage in setting our hopes on God?

Name several things included in the doing good which Paul demands of the rich.

What is meant by laying up a good foundation against the time to come?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson V—January 30, 1955

THE CHRISTIAN S STANDARD OF CONDUCT

Lesson Text

Eph. 4: 17-27; 5: 15-17

17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye no longer walk as the Oen'tles also walk, in the vanity of their mind,

18 Being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart;

19 Who being past feeling gave themselves up to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

20 But ye did not so learn Christ;

21 If so be that ye heard him, and were taught in him, even as truth is in Je'-sus:

22 That ye put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, that waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit;

23 And that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

24 And put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth.

25 Wherefore, putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbor: for we are members one of another.

26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

27 Neither give place to the devil.

15 Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise;

16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

17 Wherefore be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Golden Text.—*"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."* (Rom. 12: 21.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Col. 3: 12-17.

Daily Bible Readings

- January 24. M..... Christ in the Life (Col. 3: 12-17)
- January 25. T..... Living Cleanly and Simply (Dan. 1: 8-13)
- January 26. W..... Sins of Intemperance (Isa. 28: 1-10)
- January 27. T..... Hope Not Set on Worldly Things (1 Tim. 6: 11-21)
- January 28. F..... The World Loves Its Own (John 15: 16-21)
- January 29. S..... Love Not the World (1 John 2: 12-17)
- January 30. S..... Putting Away Evil (1 Pet. 2: 1-3)

TIME.—A.D. 63.

PLACES.—Rome and Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Ephesian church.

Golden Text Explained

1. **Be not overcome of evil.** While the word evil may have a much broader meaning, it is used here in the sense of wrongs which have been inflicted upon us. The verse preceding our text says, "But if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head." So the evil of this verse consists of injuries inflicted upon us by others, whether consciously or unconsciously. Again, we are to think of evil as an enemy which would destroy us. And Paul exhorts us to be on our guard and to be actively engaged in preventing this enemy from destroying our souls. There are several things we can do to keep

evil from overcoming us. (a) Do not brood over injuries inflicted by or troubles with others. Paul tells us not to let the sun go down upon our wrath. (Eph. 4: 26b.) This simply means that we are to get in a good humor by sundown, that we are not to brood over offenses and grievances through the night. If we nurse our troubles and offenses through the night, they may become our masters and cause us to do things on the morrow which are wrong. The wise man of the Old Testament said, "The discretion of a man maketh him slow to anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression." (Prov. 19: 11.) This does not mean that it is his glory to pass over in the sense of paying no

attention to the wrong which he has done, but it means to pass over in the sense of not taking to heart the wrongs which others have done to us. If the wrongs are trivial and will not injure the party who committed them, we are simply to forget them; but if the wrongs they do us are serious, such as would be held against them in judgment, we must not pass them over in the sense of forgetting them, but we must try to get the person to realize his wrong, confess it, and get forgiveness. So we would say that Solomon's discreet man would pass over, in the sense of giving a little heed to, the trivial wrongs and offenses which are done him; and he would pass over in the sense of forgiving those more serious injustices which are inflicted upon him. (b) Do not talk of your troubles and afflictions to others. People who brood over the wrongs done them are likely to talk to others about them. The two, brooding and talking, go together. But one can forget these offenses and injustices done him much more quickly if he will refrain from talking about them. No one enjoys holding conversation with one who refuses to talk about anything except his troubles and trials. And one who refuses to talk about anything else is certainly allowing the evil to overcome him. (c) Do not allow offenses and wrongs done to you to influence your actions. This is Paul's meaning when he said, "Be ye angry, and sin not." (Eph. 4: 26a.) James says, "But let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." (James 1: 19, 20.) If we brood over our troubles, talk about our offenses and injustices, and allow these things to influence our actions so that we take vengeance on others, and retaliate the wrongs we have received, we will be giving place to the devil (Eph. 4: 27), and we will be giving Satan the advantage of us (2 Cor. 2: 11).

2. **Overcome evil with good.** There are several ways in which we can overcome evil with good, (a) Love your enemies and pray for them. "Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. . . . Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 5: 11, 44.) Praying for your

enemies will help you to keep from brooding over the offenses they have offered and the injustices they have done to you. Praying for your enemies will help you to keep from talking about the wrongs which they have done to you. One cannot sincerely and earnestly pray for a person every day and have the wrong attitude toward that person. (b) Speak nothing but good of those who do evil to you. If someone has wronged us, either by word or deed, it is natural for us to look into his life to find something wrong, that we may retaliate either in word or in deed. But though it is natural for us to do such, that is not the Lord's way for us to live. A soft answer will turn away wrath and a compliment may cause our enemy to change his mind about us. (c) Speak kindly to them who do you wrong. Not only should we say nothing to others but good about those who wrong us, but when we talk with those who have done us wrong, we should speak kindly and gently to them. Do not allow anger to have a place in your mind, for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. (d) Seek every opportunity to do good to them that do evil to you. Paul tells us that, if it is possible, we are to live peaceably with all men. But if we cannot live in peace with men, we are not to avenge ourselves but to give place unto the wrath of God and let him take vengeance. Then he says if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. It is by doing good to them that we heap the coals of fire upon their head. Neither are we to do good simply for the pleasure of seeing them singe under the fire which we have heaped upon them. We would sum up the teaching on this point by saying that we are to be so busy in aggressive goodness to all men that we will not have time to do evil to anybody.

3. **The consequences of this course of life,** (a) If we allow evil to overcome us, both we and those who did us the evil may be lost. God does not allow any evil to come our way but that we are able to withstand it. (1 Cor. 10: 13.) So if we allow the evil that others do us to get us down, to overcome us and destroy us, it is our fault. And, of course, since the one who did the evil has destroyed a soul, he may be destroyed, and will be destroyed, if he does not repent.

(b) If we overcome the evil which others do us with good, then both we and those who did us evil may be saved. We should realize first that our own salvation is at stake in this matter of overcoming evil with good. And next we should

realize that the salvation of the one who did us evil is at stake. The saving of our souls and the souls of our enemies is worth any suffering and sacrifice which we are called upon to endure in order that we may overcome the evil with good.

Exposition of the Text

I. Worldly Standard to Be Avoided

(Eph. 4: 17-19)

And testify in the Lord. The word testify is the translation of a Greek word which means, "to exhort solemnly"; and the phrase, "in the Lord," means as moved or directed by the Lord. Paul wishes his readers to know that the things he is about to say, he says with great solemnity and under the inspiration of the Lord.

That ye no longer walk as the Gentiles also walk. Though the church at Ephesus was composed largely of Gentiles, since they were called out of the world, no longer to be a part of the world, Paul views them, not as of the world, and demands that they no longer walk like that world out of which they have been called. The Authorized Version follows some manuscripts which put the word *other* before Gentiles, and it gives a good sense. But the better and later manuscripts do not have the word for other.

In the vanity of their mind. Paul now begins to describe the walk of the Gentiles, that worldly standard which Christians are to avoid. The Greek word here translated *vanity* is so closely related to idolatry that most scholars say that this expression refers to the idolatry of the Gentiles. Macknight says, "The expression comprehends, not only idolatry which the legislators and idolaters pretended to justify upon political principles, but all the vices flowing from, or connected with idolatry, and of which the apostle had given a particular account. (Rom. 1: 14.)" Paul describes the condition of the Gentile world in these words, "Because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened." (Rom. 1: 21.) Paul then continues throughout the first chapter of Romans to describe this terrible condition into which people who refused to have God in their knowledge can go.

Being darkened in their under-

standing. The vanity or emptiness of their mind would lead to this darkened understanding. By *darkened understanding* we are to get the idea that they were incapable of distinguishing between truth and error. And again Paul says, "That they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator." (Rom. 1: 25.) When people fail to walk by the truth, they come to disregard the truth and to think of it as falsehood.

Alienated from the life of God. To be alienated from a thing is to be separated from it or made a stranger to it. The phrase, "life of God," may either mean that spiritual life which comes from God as its source, or it may mean the life which God intended they should live. People who refuse to have God in their knowledge go to frightful depths of shame and degradation, as pointed out by Paul in Rom. 1. Hosea describes the condition of a people without a knowledge of God in these words: "There is nought but swearing and breaking faith, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery; they break out, and blood toucheth blood." (Hos. 4: 2.)

Because of the hardening of their heart. Alienation from God is attributed to two things. First ignorance, and next the hardening of the heart. They were ignorant of God and the way God wanted them to live, and they were satisfied to be that way. They continued in that course until their hearts were hardened. The picture here is of a calloused condition which has no feeling. Callouses on the hand, or corns on the foot, may be shaved off without any feeling of pain. So the heart, by continued sin, may be so hardened that the word of God, the sword of the Spirit, cannot produce any feeling of shame or remorse which might lead to repentance. And Paul continues by saying that they were past feeling.

Gave themselves up to lasciviousness. Since they had continued in sin until they no longer felt shame

or regret, they could easily give themselves up wholly to working lasciviousness. And in the first chapter of Romans Paul gives a detailed account of those lascivious activities in which they engaged. This word lasciviousness comes from a Greek word which means, "wanton manners, as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females, etc." (Thayer.) Thayer also uses some other words which give us a broader meaning of the word. They are as follows: "Unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness, lasciviousness, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness, insolence." So when people give themselves over to lasciviousness, they abandon themselves to the lowest possible form of moral standards.

To work all uncleanness with greediness. In addition to giving themselves up to this low, base form of life, Paul says they go about it in a greedy manner. The word *greedy* suggests the manner in which hogs devour their food. So people who refuse to have God in their knowledge abandon themselves to a low, vulgar life, and partake of the base pleasures of that life with greediness. If a lack of the knowledge of God will cause people to abandon themselves to this course of life, how determined Christians should be to teach the word of God to everybody they can, as often as they can, everywhere they can.

II. Christ's Standard to Be Accepted

(Eph. 4: 20-24)

Ye did not so learn Christ. The word *but* suggests an opposite picture to follow. To preach Jesus was to preach the gospel concerning Jesus. (Acts 8: 35.) So to learn Christ is to learn the gospel of Christ, and Paul implies in his very first statement that a knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ will cause people to live differently from the way the Gentiles lived.

Even as truth is in Jesus. Paul qualifies his statement concerning the learning of Christ by this statement. If so be that ye heard him and were taught in him even as truth is in Jesus. So there is such a thing as preaching Jesus Christ without accomplishing all that should be accomplished. Those who do not preach the truth about Jesus Christ do not accomplish all that should be accomplished by the preaching of Christ. This should cause all of us

to exercise extreme caution in our teaching that we teach even as truth is in Christ.

That ye put away . . . the old man.

Paul now gives a summary of the truth as it is in Jesus concerning the moral standards by which we are to live. This moral standard consists of two things: a positive and a negative. The positive cannot be possessed until the negative has been exercised. Paul views their former manner of life among the Gentiles, which he called the old man, as a garment which may be taken off at will. So he says they are to put off or put away this old manner of life. They are to depart from that old moral standard by which they formerly lived, and by which the heathen world now lives. The reader should study Col. 3: 5-11 in this connection.

That waxeth corrupt after lusts of deceit. Here again Paul tells us that the former manner of life, which he had just described, works corruption. And he tells us that deceitful lusts, or desires, which cause this corruption. "Deceit is personified; it is an agent of evil, sending out lusts which seem harmless but are really ruinous—their real character is concealed; they come as ministers of pleasure, they end as destructive tyrants. Lust of power, lust of money, lust of pleasure, have all this character; they are the offspring of deceit, and always to be shunned." (Pulpit Commentary.)

Be renewed in the spirit of your mind. We now come to the positive course of action which Paul recommends for Christians. It consists of two things. The first is inward and the second is outward. We should notice that the renewal is not of the mind itself but of the spirit of the mind. The word *spirit* in this verse has an unusual meaning. It most certainly does not refer to the Holy Spirit, and it is doubtful if it refers to the human spirit, that which is the offspring of God and lives in our body. Macknight uses the word *faculties* instead of the word *spirit*. Vincent quotes a statement to this effect, "In that which gives mind both its bent and its materials of thought." While the words of the phrase are somewhat difficult, yet its meaning and implication are perfectly clear and obvious. The renewal or cleansing is not to be superficial. It is to go to the very roots, the foundation, the primary source of our lives. It is to be a thorough and complete in-

ward change of thought, desire, motives, and all the moving and impelling forces of our very nature.

Put on the new man. This is the second step and describes that which is outward, in the process of turning away from the old manner of life and living by a new standard.

That after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth. This new man has been made in the likeness of God. The character of God served as the model after which this new man was made. In the beginning man was made in the image of God. But through sin this image in man became marred, almost destroyed. Now in conversion, this image is restored in man. This new man is said to be created. This is certainly a strong term to use in reference to the change from the old life to the new. The religious world looks upon this change as being produced by a direct operation of God upon the inward man. We do not deny the change being brought about by the power of God. For man is unable to bring about that change by himself. But whether the change is effected by the immediate impact of Holy Spirit upon human spirit, or whether the change is brought about by the Holy Spirit using means adapted for effecting that change is the question here to be considered. New creatures were made on the day of Pentecost by the power of God in the person of the Holy Spirit. But these new creatures were made through the use of the gospel, which is God's power to save. So here Paul says that the new man is created in righteousness and holiness of truth.

III. Christ's Standard Applied (Eph. 4: 25-27; 5: 15-17)

Putting away falsehood, speak ye truth. Here we have a practical demonstration of that which Paul has been teaching in the preceding verses. Since they have put away the old man that grew corrupt after the lusts of deceit, and had put on the new man that was made in the likeness of God, they were to put away falsehood, which was consistent with the old manner of life, and they were to speak truth, each one with his neighbor because that is consistent with the new man which they have put on. For those who knew not God and did not care to know him, it was perfectly consistent to lie; but for one who had been taught

the gospel of Christ, and had been renewed through its power, lying was most inconsistent.

For we are members one of another. "The idea is, that falsehood tends to loosen the bond of brotherhood. In the human body harmony is observed. The eye never deceives the hand, nor the hand the foot, nor the heart the lung. The whole moves harmoniously as if the one could put the utmost confidence in the other—and falsehood in the churches is as ruinous as it would be to the body if one member was perpetually practicing a deception on another." (Barnes.) Paul says that our relationship one with another in Christ makes it inconsistent for us to deceive one another. If we would remember that we are members one of another, that we are so interrelated with each other, that when we injure our brother, that injury reflects back upon us, we would surely be more thoughtful of the other's welfare.

Be ye angry, and sin not. There has been considerable argument as to whether anger is right or wrong. By some anger is held to be a God-given passion in the mind to arouse man to immediate defense of himself, when in sudden danger, but that it should last only until reason has time to take over. Our Lord was said to be angry, but we are to understand that as righteous indignation. Our anger is usually an unholy passion. But the emphasis on this verse is not to be placed on the word anger, but rather on the expression of that anger. We are not to engage in any expression of that anger which is inconsistent with this new man created in the image of God.

Let not the sun go down upon your wrath. This suggests that we are not to allow anger to abide in our hearts; nor does this mean that we are justified in being angry until sundown. If this were true, the people who live in the far north where the sun does not go down for weeks could indulge in all the anger they please. Anger is a hurtful and dangerous, if not actually sinful, passion, and it is not to be long indulged.

Neither give place to the devil. First, let us suggest that this verse takes for granted the existence of a spirit being known as the devil. There are many who think that the devil is no more than an evil influence or our own evil desires. But this represents the devil as being a

person who is seeking advantage. Second, this verse suggests that the devil is seeking opportunities to bring about our downfall. Third, this suggests that, when we are angry, the devil has a better opportunity to accomplish his purposes than he has when we are not angry. Hence, this is an added reason why each one should strive earnestly to curb his anger.

Look therefore carefully how ye walk. Since we have put off the old man and have put on the new man, which is in the image of God, we ought to walk in love, being careful at all times to imitate the Son of God in our daily walks.

Not as unwise, but as wise. To drift back into the old manner of life would be most unwise. But to follow the example of Jesus Christ and walk in such way as will please God is a wise course to follow. Even the critics of Christ and Christianity admit that walking by the moral standards of Jesus Christ is a wise course to follow.

Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. This means that we are to buy up for our use every opportunity to do good. We should let no time go to waste, but buy or purchase that time to use for good. How can we redeem the time? One writer suggests the following: In gaining useful knowledge; in doing good to others; in employing it for the purpose of an honest livelihood for ourselves and families; in prayer and self-examination to make the heart better; and in seeking salvation and

endeavoring to do the will of God. And he might have added, teaching others that we may lead them to the Lord so that they may become new creatures.

Because the days are evil. Paul says we are to buy up the time because the days are evil. And surely this is as true of our generation as it was of his. There are so many things to lead us away from the right course, to cause us to grow tired of maintaining the high moral standard set by Christ and his apostles. There are so many things to keep us from using our time in the way Christians ought to use it. There is entertainment, some of it of a very worldly sort, every minute of every day in the home through the radio and television. And many people spend their time listening to these things rather than meditating upon the law of the Lord both day and night. Such worldly influences cannot but lead us away from the Lord. We are not suggesting that it is sinful to own a radio or a television, but we should certainly be careful that no ungodly influences are allowed to come into our home through these avenues. And we should also see that we do not spend time listening to these things that should be spent in a study of the word of God.

Wherefore be ye not foolish. Paul closes this exhortation by saying that we should not be foolish as were the unlearned Gentiles he described, but that we should understand what the will of the Lord is, and that understanding it, we should live by it.

Lessons to Learn

1. A knowledge of God is ennobling, uplifting, and purifying. But those who refuse to have God in their knowledge become debased, degraded, and defiled.
2. We should be eternally grateful to God for revealing Christ to us in his word and for the uplifting and

purifying effect which this gospel has in our lives and the lives of our associates.

3. The work of God in our hearts must be made manifest in our lives. In the absence of a practical demonstration of righteousness, we have every right to doubt the presence of an inward renewal.

Questions for the Class

- What is the topic of the lesson?
Repeat the golden text from memory.
Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.
- Golden Text Explained
- What is the meaning of the word *evil* in our text?
Why are we not to allow the sun to go down on our wrath?
What is meant by *passing over a transgression*? And why is it wise to do so?
Why should we not talk of our troubles and afflictions to others?

- What is meant by giving place to the devil?
Name and discuss four ways of overcoming evil with good.
Since evil deserves like recompense, how and when are the wicked to be repaid?
Why is it our fault if we allow evil to overcome us?
What obligation do we have to overcome their evil with good?
Worldly Standard to Be Avoided
What does Paul mean by testifying in the Lord?

What is meant by the term "vanity of their mind" as used in our text?
 What was Paul's description of the condition of the Gentile world?
 What is the condition of people whose understanding is darkened?
 What is meant by being alienated from the life of God?
 What things contributed to this alienation from God?
 Can you describe the process of hardening the heart?
 What is the meaning of lasciviousness?
 What expression describes the eagerness with which these people did wrong?

Christ's Standard to Be Accepted

What is the power which causes people to turn from the worldly standard to that of Christ?
 Can one so preach Christ as to fail to accomplish the purposes of God?
 What term does Paul use when speaking of their former manner of life?
 To what does Paul attribute corruption in the hearts of men?
 What is meant by being renewed "in the

spirit of your mind"?
 How complete is this work of renewal to be?
 How does Paul speak of the new manner of life we are to live?
 How does God create this new man which is to be put on?

Christ's Standard Applied

How does putting on the new man affect our speech?
 How does our relationship to one another affect our speech with one another?
 Is it ever right to be angry?
 Is it ever safe to be angry?
 What is meant by giving place to the devil?
 Discuss three ideas which this statement implies about the devil.
 What is meant by redeeming the time?
 And how can we do it?
 Discuss some present conditions which make our days evil.
 With what exhortation does Paul close this lesson?
 What is there of interest to you in lessons, to learn?

Lesson VI—February 6, 1955

THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS LEISURE

Lesson Text

Neh. 8: 10-17; Mark 6: 31, 32

10 Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye grieved; for the joy of Je-ho'-vah is your strength.

11 So the Le'-vites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved.

12 And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

13 And on the second day were gathered together the heads of fathers' houses of all the people, the priests, and the Le'-vites, unto Ez'-ra the scribe, even to give attention to the words of the law.

14 And they found written in the law, how that Je-ho'-vah had commanded by Mo'-ses, that the children of Is'-ra-el should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month;

15 And that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and

in Je-ru'-sa-lem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and branches of wild olive, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written.

16 So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the broad place of the water gate, and in the broad place of the gate of E'-phra-im.

17 And all the assembly of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and dwelt in the booths: for since the days of Jesh'-ti-a the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Is'-ra-el done so. And there was very great gladness.

31 And he saith unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while. For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.

32 And they went away in the boat to a desert place apart.

Golden Text.—"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10: 31.)

Devotional Reading.—Mark 6: 31-43.

Daily Bible Readings

January 31. M.....A Time for Many Things (Eccles. 3: 1-15)
 February 1. T.....Eating and Fasting (Mark 2: 15-22)

February	2. W.....	Jesus at a Wedding (John 2: 1-11)
February	3. T.....	Recovery of Strength (Isa. 40: 22-31)
February	4. F.....	Dangerous Leisure (Luke 22: 54-62)
February	5. S.....	Children Playing (Zech. 8: 1-8)
February	6. S.....	Rest and Diversion (Mark 6: 30-44)

Time.—For Nehemiah 445 B.C.; for Mark A.D. 28.

Places.—Jerusalem, and a desert place near the Sea of Galilee.

Persons.—For Nehemiah: Nehemiah, Ezra, and the people returned from Babylon; for Mark: Jesus and his disciples.

Golden Text Explained

1. **What is meant by glorifying God?** We are told to do all things to the glory of God. This simply means that, whatever we do, we do that for the purpose of glorifying God. Webster says that to glorify God means "to make glorious by presentation in a favorable aspect . . . to magnify in worship; to adore; exalt." When we live in such way as to make God real and attractive to other people, we have glorified God. When we worship in such way as to make other people desire to worship, we have glorified God.

2. **How can we glorify God?** When we think of the power, the goodness, the holiness, the majesty of God, we wonder how we poor, frail, erring creatures of the dust can possibly contribute to his glory. Anyone who feels capable in his own right of glorifying God is lacking in humility, which should characterize every sinner saved by grace; and yet there is nothing taught more plainly in the word of God than the fact that we, in spite of our weakness and proneness to err, can actually glorify the great God of heaven. Surely there is no greater work in all the world than that of saving souls from eternal destruction. We can do our part in that great work, and in this way can contribute to the glory of God. On the other hand there is nothing more commonplace than eating and drinking. Yet Paul indicates that we may eat and drink in such manner as to glorify God. We conclude therefore that in the most commonplace things of life and in the most sublime things we can glorify God. May we not also conclude that in every act between the commonplace and the sublime things we may glorify God? If we are not able to reach that conclusion ourselves, we are assisted by the apostle Paul in the words of our text which say, "Whatsoever ye do," we are to do all to the glory of God. Someone asked a heathen philosopher how one could eat so as to please God and he an-

swered by saying that one can glorify God "by eating justly, temperately, and thankfully." While all that we do must be done to the glory of God, we must not conclude that we can do just anything to the glory of God. No one can do that which is wrong in such way as to glorify God. We should remember that we are epistles of Christ known and read of all men, and that whatever we do either reflects honor and glory upon the Lord or it reflects dishonor and shame on him. So we should do nothing but that which will honor and glorify God, and we should not do anything in such manner as would detract from God's honor and glory.

3. **Why should we glorify God?** (a) We should glorify God because he is the creator and sustainer of our lives. We could not live for one minute if it were not for the goodness of God. We therefore owe to him all that we can do for him, and that he may expect of us. (b) We should glorify God because he is the Father of our spirits and the source of our spiritual life, (c) We should glorify God because of his great love for us, manifested in the gift of his Son to redeem us from sin. (d) We should glorify God because of the hope which we have of living with him in glory. We are indebted to God in so many ways, for so many things, that it is impossible for us to name them all. But wherein we are indebted to God in the least, we are obligated to give glory to him. When we have honored and glorified him to the extent of our ability, we have only begun to repay him for all the goodness and kindness that he has shown and that he will in the future show to us.

4. **Who will glorify God?** All men, good or bad, are obligated to glorify God, and will eventually do so. Those who choose to live in such way as to glorify God here on earth will be among that number for whom the Lord will come at the last great day. Paul says that at that time he will

come to be glorified in his saints. (2 Thess. 1: 10.) We are told that every knee shall bow in honor to the name of Jesus Christ, and that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2: 11.) So we have our choice of confessing him here and living for him and glorifying his name in the way we live, or refusing to live for him and glorify his name by our lives while here and then glorifying his name by being forced to confess that Jesus Christ is his Son when we stand with him in the judgment.

5. **What is accomplished by following this rule?** We look at our golden text in the setting of its context and we learn (a) that those who follow this rule do not offend weak consciences. "But if any man say unto you, This hath been offered in sacrifice, eat not, for his sake that showed it, and for conscience' sake: conscience, I say, not thine own, but the other's; for why is my liberty judged by another conscience?" (Verses 28, 29.) (b) Those who follow this rule do not cause others to sin. "Give no occasion to stumbling, either to Jews, or to Greeks, or to the church of God." (Verse 32.) (c) Those who

follow this rule seek to save others. "Even as I also please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved." (Verse 33.) (d) Those who follow this rule must be willing to practice self-denial. Again, Paul said that he sought to please all men in all things, not for his own profit, but for the profit of the many. (Verse 33.) So if we adopt the rule to do whatever we do to the glory of God, we will find that our life is a very useful and helpful life. This is true because God never requires us to do anything which is not beneficial either to ourselves or to others. And it will be a beautiful life because it will be free from pollution and defilement, and also free from anything hurtful or destructive of the best interests of others. For these reasons we should consider everything we do to determine whether or not that thing will, in any way, contribute to the glory of God. If it will contribute to the glory of God, it is a useful thing and worth while; but if it will not contribute in any degree to the glory of God, it is not worth the time and the effort that is required to do it.

Exposition of the Text

I. Remembering God in Our Leisure

(Neh. 8: 10-12)

Go *your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet*. We are told that the things which happened to the people of old and were written in the Old Testament were written for our learning and our admonition, and that they may be used by way of examples. (Rom. 15: 4; 1 Cor. 10: 11.) When a great number of Jews had returned from Babylonian captivity and were in the process of rebuilding Jerusalem, Ezra called them together in the broad place before the water gate and read distinctly from the book of the law of God, and gave the sense of the reading so they could understand. (Neh. 8: 8.) When Ezra began reading from the book which was in sight of all the people, they were so impressed that at first they stood up, and then they bowed their heads and worshiped Jehovah with their faces to the ground. (Neh. 8: 5, 6.) So deep and moving was their respect and reverence toward the word of God that they worshiped with their faces on the ground. As the people continued to listen to the

word, and to find their shortcomings revealed by a knowledge of the word, they began to weep sorely. But since this was the first day of the seventh month, which was their New Year's day, and also the day of the feast of trumpets, it was not a time for mourning and weeping. So Nehemiah and Ezra said, "This day is holy unto Jehovah your God; mourn not, nor weep." (Neh. 8: 9.) It was then that Nehemiah and Ezra told the people that this was a day of feasting and rejoicing rather than mourning and weeping, and that they should be light-hearted and joyous on this day.

Aryl send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared. They were not to be selfish in their rejoicing; they were to remember that there were people who were poor and unable to provide themselves with the necessities of life, and that when people are hungry they are incapable of a great deal of pleasure and enjoyment. So these people were to divide with the poor and unfortunate, that all might have cause for rejoicing. From this we learn the lesson

that in our periods of relaxation and enjoyment we should not be forgetful of those who are not able of themselves to enjoy such a period of relaxation. Jesus taught his disciples that, when they gave a feast, they should not give to those who had the ability to return the favor, but that they should call in the poor and the unfortunate, who were unable to return that favor. We may well apply this principle to periods of leisure and relaxation. When we wish to have a picnic, it would be a godly thing, and one which would please the Lord very much, for us to invite a family to go along with us which would not, on their own, be able to enjoy such an outing. If this sounds like strange teaching, you may be sure that it also sounded strange to the people in the time of our Lord. Jesus did not mean to teach that it is wrong to have a day of outing or a feast with your friends, but he did put the emphasis upon doing something to make the poor and the neglected happy. "We need to give attention to the distressed and relieve them as far as we may be able. It is far better to give to relieve the distressed than to set a feast for those who do not need it and expect to be entertained in return. One should exert himself to feed the poor, and help the maimed, heal the lame, and guide the blind, rather than merely satisfying his selfish pride in entertaining those who do not need it." (Boles.)

For the joy of Jehovah is your strength. The expression, *joy of Jehovah*, means that joy which we may derive from Jehovah, or which is enjoyed in relationship with God. We have a similar expression in the New Testament which reads, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice." (Phil. 4: 4.) "It must be with piety and devotion; the joy of the Lord is your strength. Let it not be a sensual joy, but holy and spiritual, the joy of the Lord, joy in the goodness of God, under the conduct and grace of God; joy arising from our interest in the love and favor of God, and the tokens of his favor. This joy will be your strength, therefore encourage it; it will be your strength, for the performance of the other duties of the feast; for all you have to do, in conformity to the law of God which has been read to you; and for the resisting of your enemies that are plotting against you. The

joy of the Lord will arm us against the assaults of our spiritual enemies, and put our mouths out of taste for those pleasures with which the tempter baits his hooks." (Matthew Henry.) "Religious joy, properly tempered with continual dependence on the help of God, meekness of mind, and self diffidence, is a powerful means of strengthening the soul. In such a state every duty is practicable, and every duty delightful. In such a frame of mind no man ever fell, and in such a state of mind the general health of the body is much improved; a cheerful heart is not only a continual feast, but also a continual medicine." (Adam Clarke.) Summing up the lessons of this section, we may say that we should remember God in our leisure by doing (a) those things which will honor and glorify God; (b) those things which will make others happy and especially those who are poor and unable to provide such recreation for themselves; (c) those things which contribute to the purity of our minds; and (d) those things which will contribute to the health of the body.

II. Learning God's Will in Our Leisure (Neh. 8: 13-17)

And on the second day were gathered together . . . to give attention to the words of the law. By leisure we mean that time which one has free from his gainful occupation. So our problem is how we may best use this leisure time. Of course, some of it must be used in bodily exercise, as was indicated in the above paragraph. In this paragraph we emphasize the necessity and the value of using some of this leisure time for studying the word of God. These people, under the leadership of Nehemiah and Ezra, were willing to give some of their time to hearing the word of the Lord read. Not everyone had a Bible, so they gathered in a public place and listened to men read the Bible. Not one-fourth of the church members have made the practice of reading the Bible daily. And many of those who do read if daily do not read thoughtfully and prayerfully. Many people have favorite radio and television programs to which they give as much as thirty minutes or an hour each day (some even give several hours a day), and yet they will tell you that they just do not have time to read the Bible every day. The word

of. God is the spiritual food on which the spiritual man grows. If we do not take a part of our leisure time to feed the spiritual man, he will starve and finally die.

They found written in the law. A very interesting incident is related in the verses that follow. Through Moses the Lord had given commandment that the people of Israel were to live one week in booths made of branches of trees. This was to be done so that they would remember that they were saved from bondage and that they lived in booths and tents for a long period of time while journeying towards the land of promise. But sometime in the days of Joshua the people ceased to observe this feast. So for about 1,000 years this feast was not observed according to the law. But Nehemiah tells us that, when they found written in the law that they should observe this feast after this manner, they went immediately and cut branches of trees and made booths in which to live. They did that which they found written in the book of the law. They set us a wonderful example of doing that which God commands. They were not establishing some new practice. They were not following the tradition of men. They were not merely following the desires and inclinations of their own hearts. They were not practicing that which their fathers and grandfathers before them practiced. But having found a plain, simple commandment in the book of the Lord, they were rendering obedience to a law which should have been obeyed by their parents all the way along. Now there was a time several hundred years ago when no religious group of people in this country taught baptism for the remission of sins, but someone found written in the book of the law of God that people should repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins. So they immediately rendered obedience to that commandment, and began to preach to others that they should obey the commandment too. He was not starting something new. He was not following the traditions of men. He was simply teaching people the word of the Lord and exhorting them to obey that which they could read in the book of the law of God. Again, there was a time when churches did not take the Lord's supper on the Lord's day as often as the Lord's

day comes around. But someone read that the disciples met on the first day of the week to break bread. (Acts 20: 7.) Having found it written in the book of the law of God that the early disciples broke bread on the first day of the week, this one began to practice that and exhorted others to do the same. He had not instituted a brand-new custom. He was not following the traditions of men. He was not merely doing that which his father and grandfather before him had done, but he was doing that which he had found written in the book of the law of God. There's never any danger in doing that which is found written in the law of the Lord. It is always dangerous, even sinful, to do that which is not written in the book of the law of God. Paul teaches us that we should not go beyond that which is written. (1 Cor. 4: 6.) And John tells us that, if we go beyond the teachings of Christ, God will not be with us. (2 John 9.) These are some of the lessons we learn from the people of long ago as they gathered to study the word of God in their time of leisure. If people today would use more of their leisure time studying the word of God, with the intention of putting it into practice, we would have more unity of thought and of action among religious people than we have at present.

III. Jesus Takes Time Out to Rest

(Mark 6: 31, 32)

Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while. These are the words of our Lord spoken to his disciples. By reading all four of the gospel records that relate to these matters, we learn that the apostles had been out on a preaching tour and had returned, and that they were in need of a rest. Then again, Jesus was interested in the success they had enjoyed on their preaching tour and wanted some time to hear them relate their experiences. We find also that John the Baptist had been beheaded and that the news of his death had just reached Jesus. And on such occasion it was the human thing for him to wish to retire that he might have some rest from his work, and opportunity to think of John and mourn his passing.

In summing up it seems wise to make some practical suggestions concerning the Christian and his leisure time. (a) Rest is for the weary.

Those who never work cannot rest. Jesus and his apostles went aside to rest only after they had spent long periods in hard work. Only those who work are entitled to leisure for the purpose of resting, (b) Leisure is the exception and not the rule. By this we mean that we should spend more of our time in gainful occupation than we spend in leisure. No one can think of Jesus spending more time hunting, fishing, and golfing than he spent doing his work. Nor can we think of the apostle Paul as being "a man of leisure." If one wishes to follow the example of the Lord and his apostles, he will spend much time at work and some time at leisure, (c) Leisure time is to be used to rebuild both the mind and the body. Many people spend more energy in their leisure hours than they do in their work. Sometimes people go on a vacation and have to cut it short a few days in order to get a few days' rest before they return to their work. The primary purpose of leisure is to rebuild the mind and body, not to tear it down and render it more unfit for work, (d) Leisure time can bring temptation. The fact that temptations are connected with leisure does

not mean that leisure is necessarily sinful. Temptations are connected with everything. But this is simply a warning that the temptations connected with leisure are of a different form to the temptations we encounter in our regular work. Hence, we should be on our guard for unusual temptations during our periods of leisure. (e) Leisure may be combined with useful activity. Some people take vacation from their work at a time when the church is conducting its revival meeting. This not only makes it possible for them to attend every service day and night, but also gives them time to visit friends and others whom they might lead to the Lord. Other families arrange their annual vacation so they can go to places where the church is weak and help them through a campaign of preaching and saving souls. A number of young people over the nation take their vacation and go into the north and east sections of the country that they may spend their time going from house to house distributing tracts and inviting people to attend the gospel services being conducted. This is a fine way to combine leisure with useful activity.

Lessons to Learn

1. We should not forget that we belong to God during our leisure hours as much as we do in our working hours, and that we must give account to God for the way we spend these leisure hours.
2. We should not forget to be mindful of the poor and those who are so unfortunate as not to be able to provide recreation and enjoyment for themselves and their family. We should learn to share our enjoyment

during these periods of leisure with those less fortunate than we.

3. Jesus and his apostles combined leisure with useful activities. We would do well to cultivate a disposition to combine more and more these leisure hours with useful and helpful activities. If we can find our pleasure and recreation of mind and body in ways that will be helpful to others, we will be more like our Lord.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?
Repeat the golden text from memory.
Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained
What do we mean by glorifying God?
Is man able or worthy in his own right to glorify God?
What do you know of the range of activities in which we can glorify God?
Is it true that we can do anything to the glory of God?
State and discuss four reasons why we should glorify God.
How and when will all men glorify God?
State and discuss four things to be accomplished by following the rule of our text.

Remembering God in Our Leisure

What good can we obtain from reading

things written about the people before Christ?
What effect did the reading of God's word have on the people in the days of Ezra?
On what day did Ezra and the people meet together to read God's word?
Why were the people told to cease crying and engage in festivities?
How were the people to show their unselfishness in their rejoicing?
What does Jesus teach us about remembering the poor in our festivities?
What is meant by the expression "the joy of Jehovah is your strength"?
Can you give a summary of the things we are to do to remember God in our leisure?

Learning God's Will in Our Leisure

What is the meaning of the word leisure as used in our lesson?

How much of this leisure time should one use in studying the Bible?
 If one does not have time for both Bible study and entertainment, which should be sacrificed?
 What was the purpose of the feast of tabernacles?
 Can you use the experiences of Ezra and his brethren to teach how we should do that which is commanded in the law of the Lord?
 Can you show that by following this rule we may restore the church of the Lord as it existed in the days of the apostles?
 What would be the consequence of going beyond the teachings of Christ in our efforts to restore the primitive church?

Jesus Takes Time Out to Rest

Why were the apostles of Christ in need of rest at the time of our lesson?
 What other reason did Jesus have for taking his apostles to a desert place for rest?
 For whom is rest intended?
 What is meant by leisure being the exception and not the rule?
 What is to be rebuilt during our leisure time?
 Of what should we be especially careful in times of leisure?
 How may leisure be combined with useful activity?
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson VII—February 13, 1955

THE CHRISTIAN AND PATRIOTISM

Lesson Text

Matt. 22: 15-22; Acts 5: 26-29

15 Then went the Phar-i-sees, and took counsel how they might ensnare him in *his* talk.

16 And they send to him their disciples, with the He-ro'-di-ans, saying, Teacher, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, and carest not for any one: for thou regardest not the person of men.

17 Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cae'-sar, or not?

18 But Je'-sus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why make ye trial of me, ye hypocrites?

19 Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a denarius.

20 And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription?

21 They say unto him, Cae'-sar's. Then saith he unto them, Render

therefore unto Cae'-sar the things that are Cae'-sar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

22 And when they heard it, they marvelled, and left him, and went away.

26 Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them, *but* without violence; for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned.

27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them,

28 Saying, We strictly charged you not to teach in this name: and behold, ye have filled Je-ru'-sa-lem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

29 But Peter and the apostles answered and said, We must obey God rather than men.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people*” (Prov. 14: 34.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rom. 13: 1-7.

Daily Bible Readings

- February 7. M..... The Great Commandment (Matt. 22: 34-40)
- February 8. T..... Responsibility of Rulers (Job 34: 10-20)
- February 9. W..... Respect for Authority (Acts 19: 35-41)
- February 10. T..... Good Citizenship (1 Pet. 2: 13-17)
- February 11. F..... In an Alien Country (Psalm 137)
- February 12. S..... Citizenship in Heaven (Phil. 3: 17-21)
- February 13. S..... Citizenship in God's Family (Eph. 2: 11-22)

TIME.—For Matthew A.D. 30; for Acts A.D. 31.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Persons for Matthew, Jesus and the Herodians; for Acts, the apostles and rulers of the Jews.

Golden Text Explained

1. That which exalts a nation.
 First, let us notice this from a negative point of view, and see some of

the things that the wise man overlooked, which many people of today think exalt a nation. (a) Great

armies do not necessarily exalt a nation. This is not to affirm that nations should dispense with their armies. Even when God ruled over his people, an army was necessary. But in spite of the fact that an army is necessary, it still is true that an army does not exalt a nation. Nor does the possession of great and well-trained armies assure the continuance of a nation. Babylon and Home had great armies, and yet they fell, (b) Material wealth does not exalt a nation. While it is impossible for a nation to conduct its affairs without money, a nation is not necessarily exalted by the possession of large sums of money. In fact, great wealth, both among individuals and nations, usually keeps bad company. The church at Laodicea boasted great wealth, and yet the Lord looked upon it with contempt. (Rev. 3: 14-22.) In order for wealth to be a blessing instead of a curse to a nation, it must be properly distributed, wisely used, and not made an object of worship or trust, (c) Great universities do not necessarily exalt a nation. Again we do not deny the value of universities to a nation, but insist that the possession and operation of such do not necessarily exalt the nation. In order for universities to be a blessing instead of a curse to the nation, they must teach truth, encourage high moral standards, and uphold all that is godly. The great universities of our land have room for improvement in all these lines, (d) Great religious organizations do not necessarily exalt a nation. We do not advocate taking religion out of a nation, but we insist that the only religion which can exalt a nation is that which *is* in harmony with the will of God.

Now let us notice the matter from a positive point of view, (a) Righteousness before God will exalt the nation. It is one thing to be righteous in the eyes of God, and quite another thing to be righteous in the eyes of men. To be righteous before God means that we meet the standard of righteousness set by the Lord. One may be as good as the people about him, and yet not be right in the sight of God. So we need to know God's standard of righteousness, and live up to it in order that we may be exalted in the eyes of God. (b) We must be righteous toward men. When a community of people have such high regard for one another that they treat each other as they wish the

others to treat them, peace and righteousness will prevail in that community. If a whole nation of people would practice the golden rule with reference to each other, that would be a peaceful and righteous nation. It would be exalted, not only in the eyes of the nations of the world, but in the eyes of God. (c) Individual righteousness exalts a nation. The nation is composed of so many individuals, and the nation can never become righteous except as the individuals who compose that nation become righteous. So the nation is righteous only to the degree that its individual citizens become righteous. If all those who make our laws were righteous, we would have righteous laws. If all those who administer and execute the law would deal righteously, we would have a righteous administration of government; and then if all of us who are supposed to obey the laws of the land would become righteous, we would keep the laws of the land. Our problem in exalting our nation is to become individually righteous and to influence as many others as possible to become righteous.

2. That which reproaches a nation.

Let us now deal with this first from a negative point of view, (a) Poverty is not a reproach to a nation. There is no shame attached to poverty, either in an individual or a nation. It is a shame for a man to be poor because he is too lazy to work: but the shame is on account of his laziness and not on account of his poverty. It is shameful for a nation to be in poverty because it is too lazy to produce or because it squanders its wealth. But again, the shame is not because of its poverty, but because of its improper use of its money or ability. (b) Small population is not a reproach to a nation. A nation does not have to be great in the number of people or in the extent of its territory in order to be a great nation, (c) Failure to become a leader in world sports is not a reproach to a nation. There are some who think it is a disgrace for our nation to lose certain sports events in the Olympic games, but winning the games does not exalt the nation, nor does losing it bring a reproach upon it.

Now let us notice from the positive point of view that which is a reproach to the nation, (a) Infidelity is a reproach to a nation. Skepticism, agnosticism, free thinking, and

a number of other terms are in common use with respect to those who do not believe in God and in God's revelation. We use the term infidelity loosely to include all unbelievers. Infidel nations do not deserve the respect of the other nations of the world and will not long enjoy it. Infidelity leads to disrespect for others and disregard for the rights of others, and soon the infidel nation will characterize itself among its sister nations as one which is not deserving of their respect. (b) Immorality is a reproach to a nation. Infidelity leads to immorality. When an individual or a nation cuts loose from the standard of morals revealed and maintained in the word of God, that individual or that nation soon drifts into immorality. And the drift does not cease until it has reached the depths of shame and degradation which Paul charged upon the Gentile world in Romans 1. The history of Babylon and Home in the long ago, and of France, Japan, and Russia in our generation, teaches us that nations cannot long endure which indulge in immorality. Those best acquainted with the crime situation in our own country wonder how long our nation can survive in spite of the depths and prevalence of immorality in our land. (c) Impiety is a reproach to a nation. By impiety we mean the lack of reverence for things sacred and holy. This, of course, is a form of unbelief or infidelity. But there are many people who claim to believe in God, and they do believe in the existence of God, and so could not be classed as infidels or atheists, but they are lacking in reverence for things divine. They are profane in the sense in which Esau was profane because he despised or lightly re-

garded his birthright, a thing which was holy in the sight of God. When people have little regard for the Bible and the standard of morals and of righteousness set forth in the Bible, when they have little respect for religion and for religious services, when they have little respect for another's religious convictions, they give evidences of impiety. Men and women who have little or no reverence for these things which are holy are a reproach to the nation.

3. **The standard of judgment for nations.** (a) If it is wrong for an individual to steal, it is wrong for a nation to steal. If it is wrong for an individual to be a bully and take things from weaker individuals, it is also wrong for a nation to be a bully among nations, and take lands and other things from weaker nations because they have not the power to resist, (b) If murder is wrong for an individual, it is wrong for nations. If it is wrong for an individual to murder his fellow man in order to retaliate for some wrong, it is wrong for a nation to murder great numbers of people because another nation has done it wrong. Nations should be able to get together and settle their differences and adjust their wrongs without resorting to slaughter, (c) If it is wrong for an individual to lie, it is wrong for nations to lie. Nations must learn the lesson of honesty and integrity. The standard of righteousness for both individuals and nations is revealed in the Bible, and that nation which honors these standards is exalted in the eyes of God and other nations. But that nation which disregards the standards of righteousness set forth in the word of God becomes a reproach in the eyes of God and eventually in the eyes of other nations.

Exposition of the Text

I. Jews Questioned the Patriotism of

Jesus (Matt. 22: 15-17)

Then went the Pharisees. The Pharisees had suffered a terrible rebuke in the parable of the wicked husbandman and would have laid hold upon Jesus at the time, but because of their fear of the multitude they sought to destroy him by other means. (Matt. 21: 43-46.) They did not feel capable of meeting the Lord in a fair, open, honest encounter, so they sought how they might ensnare him in his talk. The word *ensnare* suggests the idea of laying

a trap. Such dishonesty and hypocrisy, on the part of the religious leaders of the day, is a sad commentary on the religious conditions which prevailed in the time of our Lord.

They send to him their disciples, with the Herodians. These leaders of the Pharisees were afraid Jesus would recognize them, so they sent some of their disciples. These were young men who could pretend to be troubled with the question of paying tribute to Caesar. Luke says they were spies, "who feigned themselves to be righteous." Such deceit and

hypocrisy to trap a known criminal is bad enough, but for religious leaders to resort to such underhanded tactics to entrap and destroy a good man in order that they may preserve their position of leadership is unthinkable. The Herodians were a sect of Jews who agreed largely with the Sadducees on religious questions, but who accepted the rule of Rome through the Herods. Herod was an Idumaean and remotely related to the Jews. The Herodians were willing to accept an Idumaean rather than one of the tribe of Judah as their ruler in order that they might have some semblance of self-government. They would sacrifice principle for power. It should be noticed too that the Pharisees and the Herodians were irreconcilable enemies on both religious and political questions. But now they have a common enemy and they are willing for the time to bury their enmity and team up that they may destroy the common enemy.

Teacher, we know that thou art true. This committee of young hypocritical disciples start their attack by complimenting the Lord. Nicodemus made such a statement with all sincerity. (John 3: 2.) These young men did not believe that Jesus spoke the truth, or that he taught the way of God in truth.

And carest not for anyone. In this statement there may have been some degree of truth. If they had observed Jesus in his teaching at all, they surely had been impressed by the fact that he taught what he wished to teach without regard for what others thought about it. They went further to say that he did not regard the person of any man, and this statement was true, for Jesus exposed the sins of the leaders as well as the sins of the people who were not in power. The fact that Jesus did not bow before the religious leaders of his day to become their slave and to do their bidding, but completely ignored them, so far as gaining their authority to do his work and his teaching, is the thing that caused them to determine his destruction.

Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? This is the question which the Pharisees and the Herodians sent these young spies to ask Jesus. The question presented a dilemma to the Lord. They thought it was impossible for Jesus to an-

swer the question without doing himself an injury from which he could not recover. They expected him to give a plain positive or negative reply and indeed thought there was no escape from such a reply. If Jesus said, "Yes, it is lawful to give tribute to Caesar," he would alienate the larger portion of the Jewish population. He could never expect to become the Messiah, the ruler, of a people who hated to pay tribute to Rome by asserting that such tribute was lawful. But if he said "No, it is not lawful to give tribute to Caesar," he would be prosecuted by the Herodians before Pilate, the Roman governor, for promoting seditious views and for stirring up dissension and division. This would amount to an act of treason on his part. So the Pharisees expected, with the help of these Herodians, to destroy Jesus and his hope of being the Messiah, regardless of how he answered their question.

II. Jesus Answers Their Question

(Matt. 22: 18-22)

Jesus perceived their wickedness. We are not told how Jesus perceived their wickedness. Yet, we know that he had the power to read the hearts of men. "But Jesus did not trust himself unto them, for that he knew all men, and because he needed not that any one should bear witness concerning man; for he himself knew what was in man." (John 2: 24, 25.) And on another occasion in Capernaum Jesus revealed the thoughts of men's hearts before they had spoken a word. (Mark 2: 6-9.)

Why make ye trial of me, ye hypocrites? Jesus was not quite so diplomatic in his approach as were these young Herodians. But what he lacked in diplomacy, he made up in sincerity and truthfulness. He revealed their true character in terms that could not be misunderstood. And after all, such honesty and forthrightness are the best diplomacy.

Whose is this image and superscription? Jesus asked them to bring him a denarius. This was a coin worth about seventeen cents in our money. In some versions it is called the penny. It was the price of the average day's labor, and it was the daily wage of a Roman soldier. And it seems to be the amount which was required of each Jew to be paid as poll tax. Neither the Jews nor the Roman governors in Palestine were allowed to make silver coins. If they

made any at all, they were to be made of copper. And out of consideration for the feelings of the Jews against images, the Roman government did not put the likeness of the emperor on coins minted in Palestine. But coins minted in other countries would be brought in to Jerusalem by people going there to worship. Hence, they were plentiful. The image, of course, was the picture of the ruler, who at that time was Tiberius, and the superscription, when translated, would read, "Tiberius Caesar, the august son of the divine Augustus."

Render therefore unto Caesar the thing's that are Caesar's. In answer to the question of Jesus, these young Herodians could say nothing other than that the image was that of Caesar. The fact that the image of Caesar was on the coin was proof that it belonged to Caesar. And the fact that they were using the coins minted by Caesar was proof of their subjection and submission to Caesar. Since they were in subjection to Caesar, and being governed at the expense of Caesar, it was nothing but right that they should pay tribute unto Caesar. This part of his answer satisfied the demands of the Herodians. They could not prosecute him before Pilate for making such a statement; nor did such a statement arouse within them any resentment. In consideration of the wisdom of this statement, it should be pointed out (a) that Jesus did not endorse the aggression of the Roman empire in extending its sovereignty over the Jews. He framed his answer to their question in such way as not to involve himself in a discussion of this question. (b) He framed his answer in such way as not to involve himself in the much discussed question of whether the Jews should rebel and throw off the yoke of Rome. Pharisees generally needed but little encouragement to rebel against Rome and make a concerted effort to become an independent nation again. His answer to their question gave them no encouragement to attempt such a rebellion, nor did it imply that they should continue to live in subjection to Rome, (c) His answer was plain and positive, not evasive and deceitful. Jesus was not a coward. He was not afraid to make positive statements of what is right or wrong. It is universally admitted that the governed should bear the expenses of the government.

Unto God the things that are God's. God was no longer the theocratic ruler. The Jews had refused to allow him to be their ruler back in the days of Samuel. (1 Sam. 8: 4-9.) Hence, when they paid tribute to Caesar, they were not taking from God that which belonged to him to give to Caesar. Of course all that we have and are in one sense belongs to God. But according to God's arrangement, tribute money belongs to the ruler and should be paid to him. Our life is given to us from God. We are obligated to give it back to him in service. Our mental and physical faculties and powers are given us from God, and we are obligated to use these things for him. In this sense we give them back to him. Our time is given us of God, and we are obligated to use that for him. The idea that, as the image of Caesar was on the coins and was proof that it should be given to him in tribute, so the image of God is on man and is proof that man should give himself to God, may be a beautiful thought, but is rather fanciful. The thing Jesus had in mind simply was the fact that we belong to God, and we should recognize God's ownership and allow him to direct our activities. This part of our Lord's answer satisfied the demands of the Pharisees. They could agree with him wholeheartedly.

When they heard it, they marvelled. The question which his enemies thought would mean his destruction proved to raise him in their estimation. The question which his enemies thought could not possibly be answered satisfactorily turned out to be satisfactory to both sides. The Herodians were pleased to hear him say that Caesar should receive tribute, and the Pharisees were pleased to hear him say that we should render to God that which belongs to God. They marvelled that he could give a straightforward truthful answer and yet not become involved in difficulties which would prove his destruction.

III. The Apostles Recognize a Higher Loyalty (Acts 5: 26-29)

The captain with the officers, and brought them, but without violence. By way of getting a background, we notice that the apostles had been working many signs and wonders among the people. Sick people were being carried into streets. They were

laid on beds and couches in order that the shadow of Peter might come over them as he walked by. People with unclean spirits were brought, and the record tells us that the apostles healed every one of them. Such interest and success on the part of the early church aroused the enmity and jealousy of the religious leaders in Jerusalem. And the Sadducees were the first to do something about it. They put the apostles in jail, but an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors one night and told them to go back to the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life. So the apostles entered the temple at daybreak and began to preach again. When the high priests convened the Sanhedrin, they sent officers to the prison to bring the apostles. But the officers came back with the report that the prison doors were shut in all safety and the keepers were standing at their posts of duty, but there were no prisoners within. At this time, one came to report that the men who were put in prison were standing in the temple teaching the people.

They feared the people, lest they should be stoned. This explains why the captain and other officers brought the apostles without any violence. The apostles had done so much good and no harm at all in the city of Jerusalem that they were held in favor by all the people. (Acts 2: 47.)

They set them before the council. The word *council* here is the translation of the Greek word of Sanhedrin. In verse 21 we have both the council and the senate mentioned. The senate was composed of the chief elders of the people, and it sometimes met with the Sanhedrin. The importance which the Jews attached to these proceedings is emphasized by the fact that they had both the council and the senate convened.

We strictly charged you not to teach in this name. This is the charge made by the high priest who presided over the Sanhedrin. He went on to say that, in spite of this charge, the apostles had filled Jerusalem with their teaching and seemed to be intent to bring the blood of Jesus upon the Jews. Not long before this, Pilate washed his hands

in the basin, saying that he was free from the blood of Jesus, these same Jews said, "His blood be on us, and on our children."

We must obey God rather than men. This is said to be the answer which "Peter and the apostles" gave the authorities. Since the name of Peter is mentioned, we conclude that he was the speaker for the body of apostles on this occasion. It should be noticed (a) that Peter does not deny the jurisdiction of this court over him. He did not tell them that citizenship in the kingdom of heaven released him from obedience to his earthly government. And we know from other teaching in the New Testament that we can be citizens of the kingdom of God and citizens of an earthly government at the same time. Jesus taught people to pay tribute to Caesar, and Paul taught us to pay tribute to our government. (Rom. 13: 1ff.) (b) Peter did not deny hearing the charge which the authorities gave him. (c) Peter affirms that loyalty to God takes precedence over loyalty to an earthly government. As God is greater than earthly rulers, so our obedience and loyalty to him must take precedence over obedience and loyalty to an earthly government. We justify this precedence on the ground that earthly governments are established by and are dependent upon God. Since earthly rulers are established by and dependent upon God for their dominion, they cannot expect their subjects to submit to them in preference to God when their requirements conflict with the requirements of God. It is also true that, since earthly rulers are established by and dependent upon God, they should not make any demands of their subjects which are contrary to the will of God. This statement of the apostles has been used by conscientious men through the ages to justify their refusal to submit to government orders when those orders conflict with man's duty to God. And God-fearing governments through the ages have been slow to punish people for refusing to do that which they believe God forbids, or for doing that which is contrary to the law of the land which those conscientious men believe God demands of them.

Lessons to Learn

1. If Jesus could read the hearts of hypocrites while he was here on earth, how can men expect to hide

things from him in the judgment? We should learn never to harbor anything in our hearts which we will

be ashamed to meet in the judgment.

2. Since God recognizes the right of human governments to rule over us, we should learn that to violate the laws of that government is to disobey God, except where the laws of the government are contrary to the laws of God.

3. Our first and highest obligation is to God and we should be true to him regardless of the cost. We should allow neither man nor the government by intimidation or bribery to cause us to disobey one of God's commandments.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

State and discuss four things which do not necessarily exalt a nation.

State and discuss three things which invariably exalt a nation.

What is our primary problem in exalting the nation?

State and discuss three things which do not necessarily reproach a nation.

What is infidelity, and why does it reproach a nation?

Is there a connection between the Bible standards of morals and the good standing of nations?

What is impiety and how does that affect the standing of nations?

Can you illustrate the fact that there is but one standard of judgment for both nations and individuals?

Do you believe our nation deserves to be exalted or reproached?

Jews Questioned the Patriotism of Jesus

How had Jesus rebuked the Pharisees prior to the time of our lesson?

How did these Pharisees show their hypocrisy?

What do you know of the Herodians? Pharisees? Sadducees?

Why was the cooperation of Pharisees and Herodians on this occasion unusual?

With what hypocritical statements did these Pharisees and Herodians start their conversation with Jesus?

Can you state and illustrate the dilemma which these men presented to Jesus?

What did these men hope to gain by the answer of Jesus?

Jesus Answers Their Question

How could Jesus perceive the wickedness of men's hearts?

How did the approach of Jesus differ from that of his enemies?

What is the value of a denarius? and for what was this coin used?

How do we know that this particular coin was of foreign mintage?

What is the difference between image and superscription?

What superscription was on this coin?

Why would the answer of Jesus please the Herodians?

State and discuss three things in this statement which would illustrate the wisdom of Jesus.

Why did the answer of Jesus please the Pharisees?

In the light of this lesson what belongs to God and how can we give it back to him?

The Apostles Recognize a Higher Loyalty

Can you give the general setting of our text?

What statement in our text implies the good standing of the apostles in Jerusalem?

What is meant by the word council in our lesson?

What statement of the authorities show that they have changed their attitude about the blood of Jesus being on their hands?

What proof do we have in this lesson that men can be citizens of an earthly and a heavenly kingdom at the same time?

On what ground did Peter affirm that loyalty to God takes precedence over loyalty to an earthly government?

What is the attitude of our government generally toward men who disobey the government in order to obey God?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson VIII—February 20, 1955

THE WAY TO WORLD PEACE

Lesson Text

Isa. 2: 1-4; Psalm 72: 9-17

1 The word that i-sa'-iah the son of A'moz saw concerning Ju'-dah and Je-ru'-sa-lem.

2 And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of Je-ho'-vah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

3 And many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the

mountain of Je-ho'-vah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zi'-on shall go forth the law, and the word of Je-ho'-vah from Je-ru'-sa-lem.

4 And he will judge between the nations, and will decide concerning many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; na-

tion shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

9 They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; And his enemies shall lick the dust.

10 The kings of Tar'-shish and of the isles shall render tribute: The kings of She'-ba and Se-ba shall offer gifts.

11 Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; All nations shall serve him.

12 For he will deliver the needy when he crieth, And the poor, that hath no helper.

13 He will have pity on the poor and needy, And the souls of the needy he will save.

Golden Text.—“Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isa. 2: 4.)

Devotional Reading.—Eph. 2: 13-19.

Daily Bible Readings

February	14. M.	.....	The God of All Nations (Acts 17: 22-31)
February	15. T.	.....	No Racial Differences (Gal. 3: 26-29)
February	16. W.	.....	Kinship of the Nations (Psalm 87)
February	17. T.	.....	Pursuing Peace (1 Pet. 3: 8-12)
February	18. F.	.....	Counseling for Peace (Zech. 6: 9-13)
February	19. S.	.....	The God of Peace (Psalm 46: 1-11)
February	20. S.	.....	Reign of the Prince of Peace (Psalm 72: 7-17)

TIME.—For Isaiah 760 B.C.; for Psalms 1015 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Isaiah, David and Israel.

Golden Text Explained

1. **The meaning of our text.** Several explanations of the passage have been made, (a) Some say this text means there will come a time when peace will reign universally. “This is a remarkable prediction of universal peace under the gospel. The prediction is positive that the time will come when it shall prevail.” (Albert Barnes.) We can devoutly wish that this is the meaning of the text, but have great doubts concerning it. (b) Some believe that the meaning of our text is that universal peace is the immediate and continuous effect of the Messiah’s reign on earth. This is used by the Jews to prove that Jesus of Nazareth is not the Messiah of the Old Testament. They claim that Isaiah says that the Messiah of the Old Testament will usher in his kingdom with universal peace. Jesus of Nazareth did not usher in his reign with universal peace; therefore, he is not the Messiah of the Old Testament. Their

14 He will redeem their soul from oppression and violence; And precious will their blood be in his sight:

15 And they shall live; and to him shall be given of the gold of She'-ba: And men shall pray for him continually; They shall bless him all the day long.

16 There shall be abundance of grain in the earth upon the top of the mountains; The fruit thereof shall shake like Leb'-a-ηōō; And they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.

17 His name shall endure for ever; His name shall be continued as long as the sun: And men shall be blessed in him; All nations shall call him happy.

argument breaks down because they cannot prove that the reign of the Messiah was to be *ushered in* with universal peace, (c) Another explanation is that to the extent which nations practice Christianity they will cease to wage war. A spreading of Christianity has a tendency to cause people to abhor the horrors of war. “The gospel of Christ, as far as it prevails, disposes men to peace, softens men’s spirits, and sweetens them; and the love of Christ, shed abroad in the hearts, constrains men to love one another.” (Matthew Henry.) Observation teaches us that those nations which have been influenced most by the teachings of Christ have been the most peaceful nations on earth, and those nations which have rejected the Bible and have discouraged its distribution among the peoples have been the most warlike nations. It follows that, if the Bible is distributed freely among the peo-

pie of all the nations of the earth, the time may come when all the nations may come to abhor wars. We should remember that this does not imply that all the people, or even a majority of the people, of these nations must become true Christians for those nations to cease to make war. Our own nation is committed to peace and is leaning over backwards to secure permanent peace for the world. We believe this to be evidence of the influence of the teaching of Christ on our people, yet we recognize the fact that only a small per cent of the people of our nation are truly Christian.

2. Blessings to be enjoyed by the fulfillment of our text, (a) Great and unnecessary loss of life could be avoided. Two world conflicts in our generation have taught us how costly wars can be in human lives. Viewing our own national cemeteries and seeing pictures of cemeteries on foreign land, which cover acres and acres of ground, make us realize more than ever the cost of wars, (b) Broken bodies and minds could be saved. If we visit the veteran's hospitals of our country, we will be impressed anew with the fearful cost of wars in broken bodies and deranged minds. Men must continue for years to suffer death daily, because some men and nations refuse to learn from the Prince of peace, (c) Billions of dollars which now go to finance wars could be saved and spent for useful purposes. Our nation has spent more money in the last quarter of a century than it spent in all of its existence before. This was because of the wars and preparation for wars which have been made. (d) The billions of dollars we now spend for schools to teach war, and in training our boys in the arts of war, could be used in teaching people sanitation, how to make a better living, and in caring for the aged and many other useful ways. Our text says that the nations will not learn war any more. That would do away with the naval schools and the army academy, etc.; all our training centers could be turned into centers to teach people useful arts and trades. About half of our national budget is made necessary to provide for wars, and to be prepared to defend ourselves against aggressors. If all the nations would learn to live in peace, this money could be turned to scien-

tific research, health programs, and caring for the aged and infirm. In fact, this earth could be made the next thing to paradise if people would learn to live in peace.

3. Only Christianity can show the way to peace, (a) This is true because the God of Christianity is the God of love and peace. (2 Cor. 13: 11.) He is the source of all love and peace. His ways are the ways of peace, and until people are ready to acknowledge him as their God and to live by his ways, they will not learn the ways of peace, (b) The king of Christianity is the Prince of peace. (Isa. 9: 6, 7.) Until the rulers of the nation recognize him as the King of kings and the Lord of lords, and until they accept his standards of righteousness as their standards, they may not expect the world to be at peace, (c) The message of Christianity is the gospel of peace. (Eph. 6: 15.) Christianity has a message of peace among individuals and peace among communities and peace among nations. All those who accept its standards and live by its principles are peaceable and peace-loving people, (d) The people who have accepted Christianity are peacemakers and children of the God of peace. (Matt. 5: 9.) They seek peace and pursue it (1 Pet. 3: 11); as much as is possible they live in peace with all men (Rom. 12: 18); and they follow after peace that they may see the Lord (Heb. 12: 14); they follow after peace and righteousness (2 Tim. 2: 22); and they follow after the things which make for peace and the things whereby they may edify one another (Rom. 14: 19). The world has tried philosophy, but has failed to find peace in its jarring contradicting systems. The world has tried war to end all wars, but has failed, and now makes preparations for a bigger war to try for more lasting peace. We have tried a world congress in which to settle our differences by open discussion, but this too has failed to bring any real security. These have failed because they are not God's way. They have largely left God out of consideration. Christianity, as revealed by the Lord and his apostles, is God's way for peace. We have tried everything else that man can think of and have failed in all of them. Why not try Christianity? Why not give it a chance and see if it will work?

Exposition of the Text

I. Messiah to Teach the Ways of Peace (Isa. 2: 1-4)

The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz. Isaiah calls himself the son of Amoz, who is not to be confused with the prophet Amos. There is a tradition that this Amoz was a brother of King Amaziah, but a learned Jew, Kimchi, of the thirteenth century, says in his commentary, "We know not his race, nor of what tribe he was." (Smith's Bible Dictionary.) This first verse also indicates that the prophecy to be uttered concerns Judah and Jerusalem.

It shall come to pass in the latter days. The fact that Isaiah is speaking of something future to his time is obvious on the very face of the statement. The term *latter days* also indicates a time future to that of the prophet himself. He did not take the view that he was living in the days in which the things mentioned here would transpire. This term was used by the prophets to refer to the dispensation of the Messiah so many times that we are safe in saying that the term came to have such a meaning. It is not to be confused with the expression, "the last day", as used in the New Testament. (John 6: 40; 12-48.) The last day refers to the final twenty-four hour period of time when the Lord shall come, and the heavens and the earth shall pass away. But the "latter days" is an expression which refers to the time of the Messiah, the last dispensation.

The mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established. This is the event to which the prophet looks forward. He says "the mountain of Jehovah's house;" the word mountain perhaps refers to government. The prophet says the mountain of the Lord's house is to be established in the top of the mountains and exalted above the hills. This simply means that the government of the Lord's house shall be above all other governments.

All nations shall flow unto it. This suggests the breadth and extent of the reign of the Messiah. It was not to be a national organization, but a universal organization. The Jewish prophets taught the lesson, and yet the Jews of the time of our Lord refused to accept this very lesson.

And many peoples shall go and say. This, as well as the preceding

expression, indicates the success, the rapid growth of the kingdom of the Messiah. Daniel pictured the kingdom as having a small start, but growing to fill the whole earth. (Dan. 2: 45.) And Jesus spoke of his reign as being like the mustard seed, which is the smallest seed of all and yet growing rapidly into a large tree. (Matt. 13: 31, 32.)

And he will teach us of his ways. This indicates the Messiah's kingdom will depend upon teaching instead of the force of arms for conquering its territory and subjecting its citizens. There is no characteristic of the Messiah better known or more appreciated than this one of teaching. He was known as the great teacher. He went about both teaching and preaching in all the villages. And the apostles followed his example of teaching and preaching every day. (Acts 5: 42.)

And we will walk in his paths. This indicates the teaching of the Lord would be successful. For as the Lord teaches, so the people will walk.

Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. This indicates the beginning place of Messiah's kingdom on earth. Zion or Jerusalem was to be the place where the law should first be announced. The law was to go forth from Zion. The word of the Lord was first to be spoken or taught from Jerusalem. Perhaps Jesus referred to the prophecy when speaking to the disciples he said unto them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem." (Luke 24: 45-47.) We should notice three things which we have learned from this prophecy thus far. (a) Messiah's kingdom was to begin in the latter days; (b) all nations were to flow into it; (c) it was to have its beginning in Jerusalem. We have the fulfillment of this in Acts 2. (a) Peter said the things that were happening in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost were the things which the prophets said would be in the last days (Acts 2: 16, 17); (b) Peter said the promises given there on the day of Pentecost were for those present, for their children, and for them that are afar off including the Gentiles (Acts 2: 39); (c) Jesus said re-

mission of sins was to be preached in his name unto all nations, beginning in Jerusalem; and Peter promised remission of sins on the day of Pentecost to all who would believe in Jesus Christ, repent, and be baptized in the name of Christ (Acts 2: 38).

He will judge between the nations. It is the business of the judge to settle differences, put an end to strife, contention, division, and to promote peace and good will within his jurisdiction. Hence, Isaiah prophesies that the Messiah will bring an end to strife and war and that he will promote peace and good will throughout his dominions. In poetic language the prophet goes on to say that the people who accept the Messiah shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. The prophet uses the word nation and says that nations shall learn war no more. And nations shall beat their swords into plowshares. But, Jesus said to go teach all nations, baptizing them, the nations. (Matt. 28: 19.) But all of us know that nations can neither be taught nor baptized except as we teach and baptize the individuals that compose those nations. So when the prophet sees nations beating spears into pruning hooks and learning war no more, he simply envisions a time when individuals will accept the Messiah, learn the ways of peace, and promote good will on earth. Whether this movement will reach universal proportions is not affirmed in our text. It is true that the Messiah's reign is of a universal character, in that it is adapted to the whole world, intended for the whole world, and reaches individuals in every part of the world. But the Messiah's reign is not universal in the sense that it must convert every person in the world.

II. Messiah's Kingdom Offers Universal Peace (Psalm 72: 9-11)

They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him. In the preceding verse, David had said that the Messiah's dominion will be from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth. This, with the statement of our text, indicates something of the extent of the Messiah's reign. It is to be a world-wide movement. No such terms are used as to indicate universal sway. We are not to conclude that the prophet means that every individual within

the territories included will be true citizens of Messiah's kingdom.

The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall render tribute. Tarshish is supposed by many to have been situated in Spain. Yet there are others who claim it to have been in North Africa. But it is not necessary for us to know the exact location of this place to determine the meaning of this passage. It simply stands for faraway places; that kings from great distances shall render tribute unto Messiah. The expression, "kings of Sheba and Seba," may be taken in the same light. It simply means kings from distant lands. The queen of Sheba came to see Solomon, but no one knows exactly where her country was. Seba is supposed to have been in Ethiopia, and a good many scholars seem to think that the queen of Sheba was from Ethiopia. Certainly the king of Ethiopia in recent years believed the story, for he thought he was a descendant of that queen.

All kings shall fall down before him. This suggests the growth of the kingdom of the Messiah. If all the kings fall down before him, and all the nations come to serve him, it is supposed that the people of those nations would be subservient to him. But here again we must allow poetic license to the prophet as he pictures the future of the Messiah's kingdom in his glowing terms. We cannot take all these terms in their literal meaning. For instance, in verse 9, it is said, "His enemies shall lick the dust." Certainly the Messiah is not going to force any enemy to literally bow down and lick the dust of the earth. And again there are no such places now as Tarshish, Sheba, and Seba. We cannot take these statements literally, when there are no such literal places as these during the reign of the Messiah. Hence, it is obvious that some of these statements must be taken in a figurative sense. That being true, we are not bound to take the statements "all kings shall fall down before him," and, "and nations shall serve him," as having a literal meaning. But they do indicate the growth of Messiah's kingdom and suggest something of the peace which may be brought to the world through this kingdom.

III. Blessings of the Messiah's Reign (Psalm 72: 12-14)

He will have pity on the poor and

needy. Isaiah describes the Messiah's reign in these words, "And his delight shall be in the fear of Jehovah; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither decide after the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth." (Isa. 11:3, 4.) When Jesus was on earth, he was criticized for associating with the poor and the outcasts of the earth. When John the Baptist sent a committee to ask if he was the Messiah, or should they look for another, he called their attention to his work among the sick, the lame, and the blind, and the fact that he was preaching the gospel to the poor. (Matt. 11: 4, 5.) David pictures the Messiah as delivering the needy when he cries, and the poor that hath no helper; so the Messiah was to be the helper of the poor when they had no one else to look to for help. He becomes their helper because of the pity and the compassion which he has upon them. This reminds us of the Lord when he wished to get away from the multitude for some rest and an opportunity to talk with his apostles, but the multitude, anticipating him, went around the point of the sea and met him as he came ashore. And the record says that when he came forth, "and saw a great multitude, and he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things." (Mark 6: 34.) From this we are convinced that David pictured the Messiah in his true character.

The souls of the needy he will save. Perhaps the statement was intended to convey no more than the idea that the Messiah would save, in the sense of protecting and defending, the lives of his people. But if we give these words a New Testament meaning, we would find David prophesying that the Messiah would save the souls of those who were in need and recognized their need of a Saviour. And truly this was his greatest work. He was given the name Jesus, for it is he who shall save his people from their sins. (Matt. 1: 21.) He came to seek and to save that which was lost and was recognized by his disciples as the Saviour of the whole world. (John 4: 42.)

He will redeem their soul from oppression. Here again very likely is a statement which the writer did not intend to mean anything more

than that the Messiah would redeem his people from men who would oppress them violently. But in the New Testament the word redeem, in connection with the Messiah, has a much deeper and more significant meaning. It is generally agreed that David wrote this psalm about the work of his son Solomon, and looked beyond Solomon to the Messiah. And the psalm has been generally accepted as a Messianic psalm because there are some statements in it which go so far beyond the work and character of Solomon that the psalm cannot have its full meaning applied to Solomon. Perhaps we could give these statements about pity for the poor and needy and saving the souls of the needy, and redeeming their soul from oppression and violence a literal application so far as the psalm applies to Solomon, and a spiritual application so far as the psalm applies to the Messiah. This seems, all things considered, the best interpretation of these statements of the psalm. If this be true we have a rather clear picture of the Messiah as he had pity and compassion on the poor and the needy of his day, and as he continues to be the friend of the poor and the needy. And we have a clear picture of his work as Saviour of our souls from sin, and redeeming us from the bondage of sin. These are the outstanding blessings of the reign of the Messiah in these latter days.

IV. Messiah's Reign Will Endure Forever (Psalm 72: 15-17)

And they shall live. The meaning here seems to be that the poor, to whom he referred in the preceding verses, shall live and be able to bring to him the gold of Sheba and to pray for him continually. This shows something of the love and the loyalty which Messiah's subjects will have for him, and their interests in his welfare.

There shall be abundance of grain in the earth. This is an expression which simply denotes an abundance of blessings and soul-satisfying prosperity.

The fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon. According to Albert Barnes, the word *shake* here suggests a rustling motion of grain waving in the wind and the sound of wind whistling through trees. All this is poetic language to signify the abundance of the blessings that shall be in the reign of the Messiah.

His name shall endure for ever.
This statement deals with the enduring qualities of Messiah's kingdom. He goes on to say that "his name shall be continued as long as the sun."

And men shall be blessed in him.
Throughout this enduring reign of the Messiah men shall be blessed

in him. His reign is characterized by pitying, saving, and redeeming his subjects, and this in turn shall cause men to pray for him continually and bless him all the day long as said in verse 15. The overall picture of Messiah's reign here is one of peace, prosperity, and happiness.

Lessons to Learn

1. Nearly 800 years before it happened, Isaiah foretold the time of the establishment of Messiah's kingdom, the people who would compose that kingdom, and the city in which that kingdom would have its beginning. Man unaided by inspiration could not foretell these things. Hence, we have indisputable proof of the inspiration of the Old Testament.

2. The Messiah's kingdom was prophesied to be a kingdom of peace

which would extend its borders through the force of its teaching. Any movement such as that of Mohammed, which resorts to force or falsehood, cannot possibly be the kingdom predicted by the prophets.

3. David predicted that Messiah would be interested in the poor and the needy. Any religious movement that overlooks or forgets the poor and the needy cannot be the kingdom of the Messiah.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

What do you believe to be the true meaning of our text?

What explanation did Jews make of this text to disprove the Messiahship of Jesus?

What influence does the study of the Bible have on nations generally?

Could all nations cease to learn war while a majority of individuals in those nations are not true Christians?

State and discuss four blessings to be gained by the fulfillment of our text.

State and discuss four reasons why Christianity alone can show the way to permanent peace.

Name several things the world has tried through which to gain peace but have failed.

Messiah to Teach the Ways of Peace

What do we know of the prophet Isaiah's background?

What is the meaning of the term, "the latter days"?

What is the meaning of the term, "the last day," in the New Testament?

What is meant by the mountain of the Lord's house being established above the hills?

What statement teaches the universality of the house of God?

How did Daniel and Jesus teach the growth of the kingdom from a small beginning?

State three things which we learn from this text about Messiah's kingdom.

Can you show a fulfillment of these things in the kingdom in the New Testament?

What is meant by the Messiah being a judge between nations?

How can nations learn war no more and take up the ways of peace?

In what sense is Messiah's kingdom universal?

Messiah's Kingdom Offers Universal Peace

In what language does our text indicate the great extent of Messiah's kingdom?

How does our text suggest the growth of Messiah's kingdom?

Are all the expressions of our lesson to be taken in their literal meaning?

Blessings of the Messiah's Reign

How does Isaiah describe the Messiah's reign?

How are the poor and needy to fare during Messiah's reign?

Can you show that Jesus fulfilled this prediction concerning the Messiah?

What does our text say of the Messiah as a Saviour and Redeemer?

Messiah's Reign Will Endure Forever

What is said in our text about the attitude of the poor toward their Messiah?

How does our text suggest an abundance of blessings in Messiah's reign?

What does our text say about the enduring quality of Messiah's reign?

What is said of the blessings by which Messiah's reign will be characterized?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson IX—February 27, 1955

THE BLESSINGS OF TEMPERANCE

Lesson Text

Jer. 35: 1-11

1 The word which came unto Jeremih-ah from Jehovah in the days of Jehoiachin the son of Josiah,

king of Judah, saying,

2 Go unto the house of the Rechabites, and speak unto them, and

bring them into the house of Je-ho'-vah, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink.

3 Then I took Ja-az-a-ni'-ah the son of Jer-e-mi'-ah, the son of Hab-az-zi-ni'-ah and his brethren, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Re'-chab-ites;

4 And I brought them into the house of Je-ho'-vah, into the chamber of the sons of Ha'-nan the son of Ig-da-li'-ah, the man of God, which was by the chamber of the princes, which was above the chamber of Ma-a-se'-iah the son of Shal'lum the keeper of the threshold.

5 And I set before the sons of the house of the Re'-chab-ites bowls full of wine, and cups; and I said unto them, Drink ye wine.

6 But they said, We will drink no wine; for Jon'-a-dab the son of Re'-chab, our father, commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons, for ever:

7 Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any; but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land wherein ye sojourn.

8 And we have obeyed the voice of Jon'-a-dab the son of Re'-chab, our father, in all that he charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, or our daughters;

9 Nor to build houses for us to dwell in; neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed:

10 But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jon'-a-dab our father commanded us.

11 But it came to pass, when Neb-u-chad-rez'-zar king of Bab'-y-lon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Je-ru'-sa-lem for fear of the army of the Chal-de'-ans, and for fear of the army of the Syr'-i-ans; so we dwell at Je-ru'-sa-lem.

Golden Text.—*"We will drink no wine."* (Jer. 35: 6.)

Devotional Reading.—Psalm 107: 1-9.

Daily Bible Readings

February 21. M.....	Evils of Strong Drink (Isa. 5: 11-23)
February 22. T.....	Menace to Society (Hab. 2: 12-17)
February 23. W.....	Judah and the Rechabites (Jer. 35: 12-19)
February 24. T.....	Strong Drink and Poverty (Prov. 23: 12-19)
February 25. F.....	Strong Drink and Sorrow (Prov. 23: 26-35)
February 26. S.....	Example of Daniel and Others (Dan. 1: 8-13)
February 27. S.....	Drunkenness Forbidden (Eph. 5: 15-21)

Time.—607 B.C.

Place.—Jerusalem.

Persons.—Jeremiah and the Rechabites.

Golden Text Explained

1. **What the Bible teaches on the subject.** The custom of taking a social drink is becoming more and more common in our generation. Reliable sources indicate that there are more than sixty million social drinkers in the United States at this time. Liquor distillers and brewers are using every means available to advertise their body-destroying and soul-blighting products. Whole pages of national magazines and daily newspapers and hours of time on the radio and television are used to advertise these products which destroy the good health of mind and body of both the young and the old. We need, therefore, to give some time to learn what God has taught about this in ages past, what he has taught his people on the subject, and what he expects of them in society today.

We propose, therefore, to assemble a number of Bible references, analyze their teaching, and show you what the will of the Lord is on this subject.

(a) Strong drink destroys one's judgment. Solomon said to his son, "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes to say, Where is strong drink? Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the justice due to any that is afflicted." (Prov. 31: 4, 5.) Solomon distinctly teaches that strong drink will cause one to forget the law and to pervert justice. Therefore, the rulers of the land should not touch strong drink. God positively forbade Aaron and his sons, the priests, to drink wine, "That ye may make a distinction between the holy and the common, and

between the unclean and the clean; and that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which Jehovah hath spoken unto them by Moses." (Lev. 10: 10, 11.) It is interesting to note that this prohibition is inserted in a chapter which otherwise deals with -historical matters. It follows the account of the disobedience of Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, who offered strange fire before Jehovah and were destroyed on account of it. It therefore intimates that this prohibition was given because these sons had offered strange fire under the influence of intoxicating liquors. But that which is not good for the leaders and teachers of the people is not good for the people themselves. Isaiah said of those who reel with wine and stagger with strong drink, whether they be priest or prophet, "they err in vision, they stumble in judgment." (Isa. 28: 7.) And again we read, "Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the understanding." (Hos. 4: 11.) From these passages we are forced to conclude that the use of strong drink destroys one's judgment; his ability to discern between that which is good and evil and that which is holy and unholy. But if someone says that excessive use will do that but a temperate use of wines will not bring such affects, we learn later in this lesson that reliable authorities say that even temperate drinking does this very thing.

(b) Strong drink brings sorrow and woe. "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath complaining? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? they that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek out mixed wine." (Prov. 23: 29, 30.) And then the wise man continues by saying that those who look upon the wine when it is red and sparkling in the cup will find that "at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." When we remember that more than half of the automobile accidents in the land are connected with drink, we can understand how it brings sorrow, not only to those who drink, but those who are associated with them. In the state of Wisconsin during 1952, there were 305 divorces, and fifty per cent of them were caused chiefly by the habit of strong drink. And in Los Angeles County a superior court judge said, "During the year 1949 I presided at 424 default-divorce

hearings, and, of that number, in 327 instances intoxicating liquor figured prominently in the cause which impelled a legal separation." (James B. Willeford in Herald of Truth.)

(c) Strong drink deranges the mind. Solomon says to those who drink, "Thine eyes shall behold strange things, and thy heart shall utter perverse things." (Prov. 23: 33.) This refers to the curse in its final stages when the individual is suffering from delirium tremens. The Lord pronounces a curse upon all such and, "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that tarry late into the night, till wine inflame them!" (Isa. 5: 11.)

(d) Strong drink causes poverty. The wise man said, "For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty." (Prov. 23: 21.) When we take into consideration the exorbitant price which must be paid for intoxicating liquors today, and the insatiable thirst which they soon develop, we can understand why they come to poverty. If those who drink were the only ones to suffer from this poverty, we could have little pity; but the trouble is they do not do without their drink on account of their poverty. Their wives and children must do without food and clothing and proper shelter that they may satisfy that insatiable thirst. And Solomon puts the matter lightly when he says, "He that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich." (Prov. 21: 17.)

(e) Strong drink encourages men in shame. The prophet mentions whoredom and wine as keeping company to take away the understanding of people. (Hos. 4: 11.) Solomon often mentions the harlot and wine in the same connection. (Prov. 23: 26-35.) Paul connects the two and classes them as works of the flesh which will keep one from heaven. (Gal. 5: 19-21.) And again he mentions fornication, adultery, and drunkenness in the same connection. (1 Cor. 6: 9-11.) Again the prophet links strong drink with indecency, coarseness, and vulgarity. "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, to thee that addest thy venom, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness! Thou art filled with shame, and not glory; drink thou also, and be as one uncircumcised; the cup of Jehovah's right hand shall come round unto thee, and foul shame shall be upon

thy glory" (Hab. 2: 15, 16.) If strong drink tends to take away the understanding and render it impossible for one to make distinction between that which is holy and unholy, it could lead to nothing else than living in shame and indecency and vulgarity.

(f) The habit fastens itself upon one. After describing one who has gone to the extent of suffering from delirium tremens, Solomon says that one will say, "They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not hurt; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." (Prov. 23: 35.) The idea is that in spite of the fact that the individual had been stricken and beaten, yet as soon as he awakes, as soon as he gets able to get around again, he will seek the intoxicating liquor yet again. Of course, no one ever started the habit of strong drink with the intention of becoming an addict or a drunkard. But the fact that there are one million alcoholic addicts and four million heavy drinkers in the United States today should suggest that there is extreme danger of becoming an addict. And to those who have any respect for the word of God, this statement of Solomon that the man who drinks says, "I will seek it yet again," should come with considerable force.

(g) Someone may be inclined to set all this aside because he thinks Jesus used wine and that Paul told Timothy to take some wine. It is very doubtful that anyone can prove that Jesus ever drank wine of any strength and certainly impossible for them to prove that he used strong drink. And, furthermore, the implication is that Timothy, though suffering from a stomach ailment, refused to drink wine until Paul commanded him to do so. (1 Tim. 5: 23.) No one has any objection to alcohol being used as a medicine when there is nothing else that will do the work that it will do.

2. What some great men have said about strong drink. Speaking of those who sell liquor, John Wesley, founder of the Methodist church, said, "They murder His Majesty's subjects by wholesale; neither does their eye pity or spare. They drive them to hell like sheep, and what is their gain? Is it not the blood of these men? Who, then, would envy their large estates and sumptuous

palaces? A curse is in the midst of them. The curse of God is in their garden, their groves—a fire that burns to the nethermost hell. Blood, blood is there! The foundation, the floors, the walls, the roof, are stained with blood." Henry W. Grady said, when the nations was about to vote on the return of strong drink, "It can profit no man by its return. It can uplift no industry, revive no interest, and remedy no wrong. You know that it cannot. It comes to destroy, and shall profit mainly by the ruin of your son or mine. It comes to mislead human souls and to crush human hearts under its rumbling wheels. It comes to convert the wife's love into despair, and her pride into pain. It comes to still the laughter on the lips of little children. It comes to stifle all the music of the home and fill it with silence and desolation. It comes to ruin your body and mind, to wreck your home, and it knows that it must measure its prosperity by swiftness and certainty with which it wreaks this work." Robert Ingersoll, the great infidel, had no respect for God, but he had learned the curse of liquor, and among other things he said, "It cuts down youth in its vigor, manhood in its strength, old age in its weakness. It breaks a father's heart, bereaves the mother, it extinguisheth natural affection, erases conjugal love, blots out filial attachments, blights parental love, brings down old age in sorrow to the grave. It produces weakness, not strength; sickness, not health; death, not life. It makes wives widows, children orphans, fathers fiends, and all of them paupers and beggars. It feeds rheumatism, invites cholera, imports pestilence, and embraces consumption, covers the land with idleness, misery, and crime. It fills the jails, supplies alms houses, and demands asylums. . . . It suborns witnesses, nurses perjury, defiles the jury box, and stains the judicial ermine. It degrades the citizen, debases the legislature, dishonors the statesman, and disarms the patriot. It brings shame, not honor; error, not safety; despair, not hopes; misery, not happiness. . . . It poisons felicity, kills peace, ruins morals, blights confidence, slays reputation, and wipes out national honor. It curses the world and laughs at its ruin. It does that and more. It murders the soul, it is the son of all villainies, the father

of all crime, the mother of all abomination. It is the devil's best friend, God's worst enemy." William E. Gladstone, a great English jurist, frequently handed cards to people on the street with the following on them: "Drunkenness expels reason, drowns the memory, distempers the body, debases duty, diminishes strength, inflames blood, causes internal and external wounds. It's a witch to the senses, a devil to the soul, a thief to the purse, a beggar's companion, a wife's woe, and children's sorrow. It makes man become a beast and self murderer. He drinks to others' good health and deprives himself of his own." Dr. Richard C. Cabot of Harvard university says, "The drinker doesn't usually try to drive when he is drunk.. These accidents are

clue to the moderate—or ordinarily called the temperate—use of alcohol in amounts that would not disturb a man's speech or power of thought. It is noticeable in no way until it comes to the handling of such a machine as an automobile, which demands the quick, accurate coordination of eye and hand, the coordination which is upset by a moderate and temperate use of alcohol. Temperate drinking is thus more dangerous than excessive drinking as a cause of automobile accidents." William Jennings Bryan said in a toast to an admiral of the Japanese navy, "You won your great victories on water, and I drink to your health in water; whenever you win victor es on champagne, I shall drink to your health in champagne."

Exposition of the Text

I. Temptations Set Before the Rechabites (Jer. 35: 1-5)

The word which came unto Jeremiah from Jehovah. The events of this lesson are said to have been in the days of Jehoiakim of Judah. This was shortly before the fall of the kingdom of Judah. Storm clouds were already gathering, and the events of our lesson were made possible by the fact that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, was already assembling his army and marching in the direction of Judah.

Go *unto the house of the Rechabites.* These Rechabites, as the name suggests, were descendants of a man named Rechab, and from 1 Chron. 2: 55 we learn that Rechab was a member of the Kenite people. From Judges 1: 16 we learn that the Kenites were relatives of Moses, who went with the children of Israel from their desert homes into Canaan. They were called Midianites. In Num. 10: 29-32 we learn that Moses invited Hobab, the son of Reuel, to go along with them to the land of which the Lord had spoken good to them.

And give them wine to drink. It Seems strange that God would tell his prophet Jeremiah to gather a group of men together and offer them wine to drink. Especially is this true when we remember that God through another prophet said, "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink." (Hab. 2: 15.) But God knew that no harm would come to these Rechabites from this test, and he wished to use this incident to

teach the Jews a lesson in obedience. These Rechabites were living a life of obedience to a command given them by one of their forefathers. The Jews were failing to live lives of obedience to the commands given by the Lord. By this incident God wanted to teach the Jews a lesson of obedience and to teach them that blessing comes from obedience and punishment comes from disobedience.

I brought them into the house of Jehovah. Jeremiah gathered certain prominent members of the Rechabites into the house of Jehovah. This gathering was about as strange as one could imagine. The various elements in this incident were as strange as one could imagine. In the first place, we have a prophet who is deeply concerned with the welfare of his people and who would not for one moment think of leading any one into sin. Next, we have a group of men who all their life long have been total abstainers from strong drink. They were known of all men to refrain from strong drink because of a principle taught and practiced by them for nearly 300 years. In the third place these incidents are occurring in the temple, the house of Jehovah.

I said unto them, Drink ye wine. These Rechabites, strong men of the desert, must have thought that religion had degenerated more than they had ever suspected. They lived in the deserts because they wished to avoid the evils of the city. They refused even to cultivate a vineyard that they might abide by the principle

which Jonadab, their forefather, had taught and imposed upon them. Now they are offered wine by the prophet of God in the very house of God. Surely they must have concluded that their fathers were justified in teaching them that the city was no place for good people to live.

II. The Rechabites Stand by Their Principles (Jer. 35: 6-11)

We will drink no wine. If circumstances could ever justify drinking strong drink, surely these Rechabites would have been justified in doing so at this time. Their forefathers had taught them two principles. First, they were to drink no wine. And second, they were not to live in houses, but in tents. They had temporarily departed from the second of these principles; for, on account of imminent danger from the army of Nebuchadnezzar, they had left the desert country in which they lived and had come within the walls of Jerusalem. However, they brought their tents along and refused to live in houses even in Jerusalem. But they had left the deserts where their fathers lived and taught them to live. Now they could well have reasoned, since we have departed somewhat from the principle our fathers taught us, and since it is a prophet of God that offers us wine to drink, and since he does it in the very precincts of the house of God itself, surely we will not be condemned for departing from another principle taught by our forefathers and drink a little wine for this time only. But in spite of the favorable situations and inducements, they stood by their principle, and said, *We will drink no wine.*

Jonadab, . . . our father, commanded us. This Jonadab is elsewhere called Jehonadab. This Jonadab lived in the time of Jehu, king of Israel. During the reign of Ahab and Jezebel, the prophets of Baal were in the ascendancy. Though Elijah, at Mount Carmel, dealt the worship of Baal a staggering blow, he did not destroy it. And when Jehu took over, he was determined to destroy the worship of Baal. With the help of this Jonadab, called Jehonadab by Jehu, he gathered the worshippers of Baal into the place where Baal was worshiped and, under the pretense of offering worship to Baal, shut the doors and had all put to death. (2 Kings 10: 15-28.) If this Jonadab was willing to help Jehu to extinguish idolatry in Israel,

we may be sure that he was a worshiper of the true God; and it was this man that commanded his children not to drink wine, neither build houses, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyards, nor to have any of these things.

And we have obeyed the voice of Jonadab. Just why Jonadab imposed these restrictions and this hard life on his children and his descendants we have no way of knowing. Jonadab could very well have observed that luxury leads people into lasciviousness and licentiousness, and wishing to spare his people these sins, and the curse of God upon those who practiced them, committed them to a life of hardship and poverty that they might not thus be tempted. Again, living in the deserts with no sign of prosperity would not tempt foreign nations or aspiring chiefs of other tribes to wage war against them. Jonadab was enough of the ascetic to believe that a simple, pure life in the deserts was much better than the complex, sinful, and soft life of the cities. These Rechabites were proud of their ancestor Jonadab, and they were proud of the fact that they had lived according to his commandment all their days. It was this lesson of obedience that Jeremiah, under the inspiration of God, sought to teach his people. The point was, if these Rechabites would take seriously enough the teaching of their ancestor Jonadab to allow that teaching to determine the way they lived, then surely the children of God could love God and respect God enough to allow his teachings and his commandments to determine the way they lived. Jeremiah wished to use the faithfulness of the Rechabites to their father Jonadab to condemn the Jews for their unfaithfulness to the commands of their heavenly Father Jehovah.

Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans. This is a statement which these Rechabites made for their presence in Jerusalem. The army of Nebuchadnezzar was on the move, and they were in the path of that army, and so they came to Jerusalem that they might enjoy the protection which the walls about the city could give to them. We might note in passing that the Rechabites violated one part of the teaching of their ancestor Jonadab, but refused to violate another. Jonadab had taught them to live

in the deserts, to stay out of the cities; but temporarily they forsook that part of his teachings, yet, when asked to drink wine, they refused even for that short time to violate that part of the teaching of their ancestor. There was no moral principle involved in their leaving the desert and living in the city for a while. But there would have been a moral principle involved in departing from the principle of indulging in strong drink. So they were

willing to depart from the teaching of their ancestor in case of necessity when there was no moral principle involved. But regardless of the danger involved, they refused to depart from his teaching where there was a moral principle involved. If these people could live thus faithfully to the commandments of their ancestor, we ought to live as faithfully to the commandments of our God, whether they are of a positive or of a moral nature.

Lessons to Learn

1. We are told that the people of the United States spend \$61.44 per capita for intoxicating liquors. If this amount, about ten billion dollars, could be spent for better education and better care for the poor and unfortunate, we would have a better right to call our nation a Christian nation.

2. A practice which is attended by much evil and absolutely no good at

all has no place in a Christian's life. The use of alcoholic drinks is attended by absolutely no good at all, and consequently should have no part in the Christian's life.

3. If people can subject themselves to a rough desert life in order to be obedient to the command of an earthly ancestor, surely we can subject ourselves to a life of self-denial and sacrifices in obedience to the commandments of our heavenly Father,

Questions for the Class

- What is the topic of the lesson?
- Repeat the golden text from memory.
- Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.
- Golden Text Explained
- What is the number of estimated social drinkers in our country today?
- What does Solomon say of the effect of drink on rulers?
- Why did God forbid the priests to drink wine?
- Does the location of this passage throw any light on the action of Nadab and Abihu?
- What does Solomon say about strong drink bringing sorrow?
- Can you show this statement to be true from some observations about us today?
- What effect does strong drink have upon the mind?
- What is the financial effect of strong drink?
- What is the connection between strong drink and shame?
- What is said about the habit of drink fastening itself upon one?
- How many heavy drinkers and addicts are in our country today?
- Is there any proof that Jesus drank intoxicating liquors?
- Does Timothy's use of wine as a medicine justify one's use of it today for pleasure?
- What statement by imminent men quoted in our lesson impressed you most?
- What do you think of the statement that temperate drinking is more dangerous than excessive drinking as a cause of automobile accidents?

- Temptations Set Before the Rechabites
- What do you know of national conditions at the time of our lesson?
- What do you know of the background of the Rechabites?
- Why did God have one of his prophets offer this people strong drink?
- What are the various elements which go together to make this a very strange incident?
- What idea would the Rechabites have of the religion of the Jews on account of this incident?
- The Rechabites Stand by Their Principles
- What two principles had the fathers of the Rechabites taught them?
- Which one of these principles had the Rechabites temporarily abandoned?
- What seemingly good reason could the Rechabites have given for taking strong drink at this time?
- What do you know of Jonadab and his faithfulness to God?
- Why did Jonadab teach his people to live in the deserts?
- What was the lesson which Jeremiah sought to teach his people by the incidents of this lesson?
- What reason did the Rechabites give far being in Jerusalem at the time of the lesson?
- Why should the Rechabites forsake one principle Jonadab taught them but refuse to forsake the principle concerning drinking wine?
- Is it unreasonable for God to expect us to be as faithful to his teachings as men are to the traditions of their fathers?
- What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson X—March 6, 1955

OVERCOMING RACIAL PREJUDICE

Lesson Text

Acts 10: 9-15; Gal. 2: 11-14; 3: 28, 29

9 Now on the morrow, as they were on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour:

10 And he became hungry, and desired to eat: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance;

11 And he beholdeth the heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending, as it were a great sheet, let down by four corners upon the earth:

12 Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts and creeping things of the earth and birds of the heaven.

13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill and eat.

14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common and unclean.

15 And a voice came unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, make not thou common.

11 But when Ce'-phas came to An'-ti'-och, I resisted him to the face, because he stood condemned.

12 For before that certain came from James, he ate with the Gentiles; but when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing them that were of the circumcision.

13 And the rest of the Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that even Bar'-na-bas was carried away with their dissimulation.

14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Ce'-phas before *them* all, If thou, being a Jew, livest as do the Gen'-tiles, and not as do the Jews, how compellest thou the Gen'-tiles to live as do the Jews?

28 There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one *man* in Christ Je'-sus.

29 And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise.

GOLDEN TEXT.— *Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him*" (Acts 10: 34.)

Devotional READING.— Eph. 2: 11-18.

Daily Bible Readings

February	28. M.	Origin of the Nations (Gen. 11: 1-9)
March	1. T.	Eve Mother of All (Gen. 3: 9-21)
March	2. W.	One God Created All (Mai. 2: 10-16)
March	3. T.	God Acknowledged as Father (Isa. 63: 15-19)
March	4. F.	Jesus and the Samaritan Woman (John 4: 5-14)
March	5. S.	Our Obligation to All Races (Rom. 1: 13-17)
March	6. S.	Racial Prejudice Rebuked (Acts 13: 44-52)

TIME.—For Acts A.D. 41; for Galatians A.D. 58.

PLACES.—For Acts, Joppa; for Galatians, Corinth.

PERSONS.—Peter, Paul, and all Christians.

Golden Text Explained

1. God is no respecter of persons. First, we wish to notice some misuses and misapplications of this principle. (a) There are some who say that, since God is no respecter of persons, there never has been and never can be any change in the plan of salvation. The claim is made that, if God had one plan of salvation before the cross, and another plan of

salvation since the cross, he would be a respecter of persons. The Holy Spirit tells us positively that there has been a change of law, for we read, "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law." (Heb. 7: 12.) In Jer. 31 the prophet predicted a change of the covenant or law, and in Heb. 8 we are told that the

change foretold by Jeremiah has taken place; and in Heb. 10: 9 we are told, "He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second." There is a general principle that runs through all of God's dealings with man. That is the principle of obedience. God has always required obedience of man, regardless of whether he lived before the time of Christ or since the time of Christ. But the obedience which he required before the death of Christ is different from the obedience that he requires since the death of Christ. But, in spite of this change, Peter says that God is no respecter of persons. Hence, this change in the plan of salvation does not make God a respecter of persons,

(b) God made man the head of the woman and put woman in subjection to the husband. (Eph. 5: 22, 23.) Some have taken this to mean that God is a respecter of persons in that he gave man the advantage over the woman. (c) Others have thought that, because man is given the liberty to do public preaching, and women are told to be silent (1 Cor. 14: 34), therefore, he is a respecter of persons and unfair to the women. Those who would make such charges would measure wisdom with God and tell him how he ought to run his affairs. Giving different people different duties to perform has nothing to do with determining whether God is a respecter of persons. One might as well charge that God is a respecter of the parts of the body because he gave the mouth and tongue the pleasant sensation of taste, while he gave the feet the burdensome duty of carrying the body about. The whole body cannot be the tasting apparatus, nor can the whole body be the carrying member. So, God gave man his place in the home and in the church, and he gave woman a different place in the home and in the church from that which he gave man. This distinction is based upon perfectly good and obvious reasons. (1 Cor. 11: 8-11; 1 Tim. 2: 13, 14.)

Now let us notice some of the things on the positive side which are included in this statement that God is no respecter of persons, (a) God does not favor the rich above the poor nor the poor above the rich. If God were to save the rich and dam the poor, or save the poor and condemn the rich, regardless of how they lived, he would certainly be a respecter of persons. If a rich man obeys the gospel and lives in harmony

with the teaching of Christ, he has just as good chance of going to heaven as the poor man has who obeys the gospel and lives in harmony with the teachings of Christ. (b) God does not favor the wise above the simple, nor does he favor the simple in preference to the wise. If God were to save the highly educated people and condemn those who have not a college education, he would be a respecter of persons. But God does not judge us on the basis of whether or not we have a college or university education, (c) God does not favor one race above the other. This is the main point in our lesson today, and the lesson for us to learn is that, since God does not favor one race above another, we should make no distinction between the races. If God were to save the whites because they are white, and condemn the blacks because they are black, he would certainly be a respecter of persons. But God will punish a white man for disobedience just as quickly and as surely as he will punish the colored man for the same disobedience. God will hear the prayers of the humble colored man just as quickly and with as much mercy and compassion as he will listen to the prayers of a white man. No one race has any claim to God. He is the God of all men and the Father of all spirits. Since he is the Father of all spirits, we then are brethren. If someone dislikes the idea that he is a brother to the Negro, or the Indian, or the Chinese, he does not have the proper attitude. His attitude is positively un-Christian and sinful. The fatherhood of God argues the brotherhood of man. And just as surely as God is the Father of all men, just that surely all men are brothers: and the white race has great cause for rejoicing that God is no respecter of races, because for 1500 years during the Jewish dispensation they were Gentiles and at great disadvantage. (Rom. 3: 1, 2; Eph. 2: 11, 12.)

2. God expects all to fear him. God does not expect them to fear him as we fear a wild beast or an insane man. The word fear has the meaning of awe, profound reverence, and veneration. The word awe is defined to mean reverential fear or veneration, a solemn wonder. And the word veneration means respect mingled with awe, excited by dignity, wisdom, or superiority of a person by sacredness of character. (Webs-

ter's Dictionary.) So the fear that should characterize us in the presence of God, and that fear which God demands of each one of us in order that we may be acceptable to him, is a profound reverence for him and for his law. It means that we should stand in awe or reverential fear in the presence of God; that we should look upon him with solemn wonder and admiration. It means that we should hold him in the highest of respect, a respect which is mingled with awe or solemn wonder. It means too that we should be excited and stand in solemn wonder at the dignity and the wisdom of God, and at the superiority of his person over our person. It means that we should be excited by the sacredness, the holiness of his character, as compared with the sinfulness and worthlessness of our character. As the criminal, standing for his first time in high court before the judge, does everything he can to show respect and consideration for the high office of the judge, so we as sinners should approach God with that utmost degree of respect and reverence of which we are capable.

3. **God expects all to work righteousness.** In this text we are told to fear God and work righteousness to be acceptable, while in Eccles. 12: 13 we are told to fear God and keep his commandments. Then in Psalm 119:

172 we are told that all of God's commandments are righteousness. Hence, we conclude that when we obey the commandments of God we are working that righteousness which, together with fear, makes us acceptable to God. There are but two kinds of righteousness which man can possibly work. He may work God's righteousness or he may work his own righteousness. Man's righteousness has always been rejected by the Lord. So we know that Peter does not mean to say that the man who fears God and works man's righteousness is acceptable to God. Hence, we conclude that the person who fears God and works God's righteousness, which means to obey his commandments, is acceptable unto God. We should notice also that fearing God and working righteousness are two separate and different things. It is possible for people to fear God, at least in some degree, without working righteousness. We are told that the Jews "feared Jehovah, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away." (2 Kings 17: 33.) So there are people today, especially in the denominational world, who fear God to a degree and yet they follow the traditions of men, they work the righteousness of man. Not only must one fear God to be acceptable to him, but he must both fear God and work his righteousness.

Exposition of the Text

I. God Teaches Peter the Lesson

(Acts 10: 9-15)

Drew nigh unto the city. As a background for this, we need to remember that Cornelius, a Roman centurion, who was a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the poor, and prayed to God always, had seen a vision in his home at the ninth hour of the day, or three p.m. In his vision he saw an angel of God coming into him and telling him that his prayers and alms had gone up for a memorial before God. It also told him that he was to send men to Joppa to get Simon Peter, who, when he was come, would speak unto him words whereby he and all his house should be saved. (Acts 11: 14.) Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier that waited on him continually, told them of the vision he had seen, and sent them to Joppa to bring the apostle Peter.

So it was this company that drew nigh to the city when Peter was up on the housetop praying at noontime.

He fell into a trance. "The word trance or ecstasy denotes the state of mind when the attention is absorbed in a particular train of thought, so that the external senses are partially or entirely suspended. It is a high species of extraction from external objects when the mind becomes forgetful of surrounding things, and is fixed solely on its own thoughts, so that appeals to the external senses do not readily arouse it. . . . This effect seems to be caused by so intense and absorbed train of thought as to overcome the senses of the body, or wholly withdraw the mind from the influence, and to fix it on the unseen object that engrosses it." (Albert Barnes.) Peter says that it was while he was in this trance that he saw the vision, the description of which follows. (Acts 11: 5.) Hence, we

must not confuse the trance with the vision.

And he beholdeth the heaven opened. Here we have a description of the vision which he beheld while he was in this trance. A vision means simply that which is seen. The fact that Peter was in a trance does not lessen the force of the statement that he had a vision, or that he saw the things which he describes. That which he saw was a vessel let down by the four corners. This vessel was "as it were a great sheet." This does not say that it was a sheet. However, it says that it was a vessel like a sheet knit at the four corners. In this vessel there were all manner of four-footed beasts and creeping things of the earth and birds of the heaven. Therefore, it included both the clean and the unclean animals. Moses gave the Jews a rule by which they could determine what was clean and what was unclean for the purpose of eating. "These are the living things which ye may eat among all the beasts that are on the earth. Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is clovenfooted, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that may ye eat. Nevertheless these shall ye not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that part the hoof: the camel, because he cheweth the cud but parteth not the hoof, he is unclean unto you. And the coney, because he cheweth the cud but parteth not the hoof, he is unclean unto you. And the hare, because she cheweth the cud, but parteth not the hoof, she is unclean unto you. And the swine, because he parteth the hoof, and is clovenfooted, but cheweth not the cud, he is unclean unto you." (Lev. 11: 2-7.)

Rise, Peter; kill and eat. Here was a voice from heaven saying to Peter to kill and eat of these animals which he had been taught all his life were unclean. So he replied, "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common and unclean." As a Jew, one who honored the law of Moses as being the law of God, Peter had denied himself those things that the law classed as unclean; and so determined was he to keep this law that he would even argue with a heavenly messenger telling him to act to the contrary.

What God hath cleansed, make not thou common. It is true that God had, by this time, made all meats clean (Mark 7: 19; 1 Tim. 4: 3-5), but this is not the teaching of our text. And

Peter would not have known the meaning of this statement made to him by the heavenly voice if it had not been for the incidents which followed. The messengers from Cornelius arrived and told Peter their business. He immediately determined to go with them and when he had arrived at the house of Cornelius, he understood what the heavenly voice meant when it said, "What God hath cleansed, make not thou common." And here is Peter's explanation. "Ye yourselves know how it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to join himself or come unto one of another nation; and yet unto me hath God showed that I should not call any man common or unclean." (Acts 10: 28.) So the lesson which Peter learned from the vision was that he should not call any man unclean whom God was willing to accept. And since he was led by the Lord to the house of a Gentile, he now realized that he was not any longer to consider a Gentile as unclean or beneath him in his standing before God.

II. Peter Stumbles on the Race Question (Gal. 2: 11-14)

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I resisted him to the face. In the first paragraph of the second chapter of Galatians, Paul gives his version of the Jerusalem conference, where the question of circumcision of Gentiles was settled. Peter took part in that conference and gave to Paul and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, thus endorsing their stand on the matter of circumcision of the Gentiles. But not long after this time, Peter was in Antioch of Syria, along with Paul and Barnabas, and other preachers of the gospel.

He drew back and separated himself. Paul tells us that when certain men came from James, who lived in Jerusalem and was a great influence in the church, Peter was afraid of what they would think and say back at Jerusalem, so he refused to eat any longer with Gentiles. Until this group came from Jerusalem, Peter was eating with Gentiles, making no distinction between Jew and Gentile, according to the decision made at the Jerusalem conference. But when this group came, he was afraid of what they might say or do and consequently separated himself from the Gentiles. It was this change in the attitude and conduct of Peter that caused Paul to resist him to the face

and to say that Peter stood condemned.

The rest of the Jews dissembled likewise with him. This shows the influence which Peter had. His separation from the Gentiles caused other Jews to do likewise. The word *dissemble* means "to hide under a false semblance; to feign; disguise. To make pretense of." (Webster.) This was simply a form of hypocrisy. Being guilty of this pretense, or "false semblance," we can understand why Paul said that Peter was to be condemned.

Even Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation. Barnabas was for a long time the companion of Paul in missionary travels. But so great was the influence of Peter and these who came from Jerusalem, and so difficult was it to overcome racial prejudice, that Barnabas was carried away with this dissimulation.

When I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel. From this we may learn (a) that the practice of dissimulation is not walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel. The practice of deceit is always wrong, (b) To practice racial distinction contrary to the teaching of God is wrong. And without doubt this is the point which Paul had in mind when he said that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel. So we need to be careful lest we cultivate a feeling of race superiority in the realm of religion. Our superior financial and intellectual advantages over the people of many other nations, and the leading part which our nation takes in the affairs of the world, might easily lead us into the sin of feeling superior to other people. We must remember that it is not the color of our skin that secures a favorable answer to our prayers.

I said unto Cephas before them all. We may learn from this incident (a) that it is right for one Christian to rebuke another. It is right for one preacher to rebuke another; (b) Paul rebuked Peter publicly; hence, we conclude that public rebuke for public wrong is right and scriptural. Some people fear that a public rebuke in which names of offenders are called will create dissension, will belittle the church in the eyes of the world, and do more harm than good. Paul did not hold this attitude, so he rebuked Peter publicly. And we conclude that it may be done today

and should be done if public offense has been committed.

If thou, being a Jew. McGarvey paraphrases this verse as follows: "If thou, being a Jew to begin with, livest, as is shown by your past custom, like a Gentile, and not like the Jews, by what right do you demand, by your changed custom, that the Gentiles should live like Jews?" From the time Peter arrived in Antioch until these brethren came from Jerusalem, Peter had been living like the Gentiles. That is, he had been making no distinction between Jews and Gentiles. But as soon as these brethren came from Jerusalem, Peter withdrew and refused to eat with Gentiles, making a distinction between Jew and Gentile. And by his actions he said that Gentiles should be circumcised and keep the law of Moses. So Paul accused him first of living like the Gentiles, and then of changing his position and compelling the Gentiles to live as do the orthodox Jews. His action was (a) obviously inconsistent; and (b) it was not in harmony with the truth, (c) The fact that Peter's action was not in harmony with truth which God had revealed to him, and which he had formerly practiced, was evidence of his insincerity, his hypocrisy. So Peter had his trouble with the race problem. He was brought up to believe that the Gentiles were as dogs, far beneath his level, and that God regarded him more highly than he regarded Gentiles. It is easier for people to change their theory than it is to change their practice and dispositions.

III. All in Christ Are Abraham's Seed (Gal. 3: 28, 29)

There can be neither Jew nor Greek. This statement does away with national and racial distinction and discriminations. But this statement must be taken in a limited sense. The fact is Paul limited the statement himself. It is limited by the phrase, "in Christ Jesus." If we say there is no longer any such thing as a Jew, we say that which is not true. If we say there is no such thing as a Greek, we say that which everybody knows is false. Christianity does not do away with these physical, racial distinctions and differences. Furthermore, when a child of Abraham becomes a Christian, he does not cease to be a Jew. When a citizen from Greece becomes a Christian, he does not cease to be a

Greek. So the statement is not only limited by this phrase, "In Christ Jesus," but it is limited to the subject under consideration. The subject under consideration is salvation. So the sense of the statement is that in matters concerning our salvation God does not deal with the Jew on a basis different from that on which he deals with the Greek. God does not deal in matters pertaining to our salvation one way with a white man and another way with an Indian, and still another way with the colored man.

There can be neither bond nor free. This statement brings us into the social realm. God does not allow our social standing to determine our standing with him. But again this must be limited to the subject under consideration. In spite of the fact that Paul says there can be neither bond nor free, he still recognizes some men as masters and others as slaves. (Eph. 5: 6-9.) So Paul does not mean to say that there is no longer any such thing as a slave or a free man. His idea is that being a free man does not commend you to God nor does being a slave condemn you. One's salvation does not depend on whether or not he is free or in bondage.

There can be no male and female.

Becoming a Christian does not rob us of the distinction between the sexes. But Paul means to teach that, regardless of whether one is a male or a female, he is neither commended to God, nor is he at a disadvantage. One's standing before God is not determined by whether one is male or female. All are one; that is, all stand on the same footing before God in Christ Jesus.

If ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed. The Jews boasted of being Abraham's seed. They considered themselves as the only heirs of Abraham, and consequently the only heirs of the blessings promised to Abraham in his seed. But Paul says that whether a person is an heir of Abraham no longer depends upon being a physical descendant of Abraham. But it depends upon whether or not a person belongs to Christ. If one belongs to Christ, then he is an heir of the promise made to Abraham. If one is not in Christ, he is not an heir of that promise, regardless of how rich, how intelligent, or how important he may be. The Negro, the Indian, and the Chinese are just as much the seed of Abraham as is the Jew. The truth is, neither of them is the seed of Abraham unless he accepts Christ as his Saviour and Lord.

Lessons to Learn

1. Although Peter was an apostle and baptized in the Holy Spirit, he did not know all truth. Several years after his baptism in the Holy Spirit God had to give him a vision to teach him that he was not any better in the sight of God than a Gentile.

2. In spite of the fact that Peter was an apostle and baptized in the Holy Spirit, he wavered under trial and walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel. We should

learn from this that Holy Spirit baptism was not given to men to render them sinless in their application of Christian truth.

3. Becoming a Christian does not erase all national, social, and physical distinctions. Such distinctions remain, and with them we must deal. But God does not determine one's standing before him on the ground of his national, social, or physical standing.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?
Repeat the golden text from memory.
Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

Can God change his plan of salvation from one dispensation to another and still be no respecter of persons? Illustrate your answer.

Can you show that God is no respecter of persons though he made man to be the head of the woman?

Can you show that God is no respecter of persons though he refused woman the liberty of public preaching?

What is God's attitude toward the rich

and poor, the wise and simple, which proves that he is no respecter of persons?

What is God's attitude toward the various races, which proves that he is no respecter of persons?

Why has the white race good grounds for rejoicing that God is no respecter of persons or races?

What is the meaning of the word fear in our lesson?

Name the various kinds of righteousness which man can possibly work.

Which of these kinds of righteousness does God require man to work?

Can one fear God to any degree without obeying God?

God Teaches Peter the Lesson

- Can you give the background of the incidents of our lesson?
- What is a trance and what is the difference between a trance and a vision?
- What did Peter see in his vision?
- How can you distinguish between the clean and the unclean according to the law of Moses?
- To what extent was Peter committed to this law concerning eating of unclean meats?
- When did Peter learn the meaning of the statement made to him in the vision?
- What was the lesson which God intended for Peter to get from this vision?
- Peter Stumbles on the Race Question
- Did Peter ever endorse Paul in his work with Gentiles?
- Give a complete picture as you conceive of it how Peter acted at Antioch which brought criticism from Paul.
- What was the influence of Peter upon others on this occasion?
- Of what specific sin is Peter said to be guilty?

- In what two ways was Peter not walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel?
- Why are we in danger of cultivating a feeling of race superiority in religion?
- What two lessons can we learn from Paul's public rebuke of Peter?
- What three conclusions may we draw from Peter's action?
- All in Christ Are Abraham's Seed
- Does Christianity do away with all physical, racial, and social distinctions?
- What then is meant by the statement, in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek?
- What does Paul mean when he says that we are neither bond nor free in Christ?
- What is meant by the statement that we are neither male nor female in Christ?
- Why did the Jews boast that they were Abraham's seed?
- Who are the true seed of Abraham?
- What blessing is attached to being the seed of Abraham?
- What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson XI—March 13, 1955

WINNING THE WORLD TO CHRIST

Lesson Text

Mark 1: 16-20; Acts 26: 12-19

16 And passing along by the sea of Gal'i-lee, he saw Si'-mon and Andrew the brother of Si'-mon casting a net in the sea; for they were fishers.

17 And Je'-sus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.

18 And straightway they left the nets, and followed him.

19 And going on a little further, he saw James the son of Zeb'-e-dee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending the nets.

20 And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zeb'-e-dee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after him.

12 Whereupon as I journeyed to Da-mas'-cus with the authority and commission of the chief priests,

13 At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them that journeyed with me.

14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice saying unto me in the Hebrew language, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the goad.

15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Je'-sus whom thou persecutest.

16 But arise, and stand upon thy feet: for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee;

17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gen'-tiles, unto whom I send thee,

18 To open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God. that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me.

19 Wherefore, O king A-grip'-pa. I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.

Golden Text.—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation " (Mark 16: 15.)

Devotional Reading.—John 1: 40-45.

Daily Bible Readings

- March 7. M.....Fishers of Men (Mark 1: 16-20)
- March 8. T.....Wisdom of Soil Winners (Prov. 11: 25-31)
- March 9. W.....Reward of Soul Winning (Dan. 12: 1-13)

March 10. T. Soul Saved from Death (James 5: 19, 20)
 March 11. F. Great Commission (Matt. 28: 18-20; Mark 16: 15, 16)
 March 12. S. Debt to Others (Rom. 1: 13-17)
 March 13. S. Christ Came to Save Us (Phil. 2: 4-16)

TIME.—For Mark, A.D. 27; for Acts, A.D. 62.

PLACES.—For Mark, by the Sea of Galilee; for Acts, Caesarea.

PERSONS.—For Mark, Jesus, Andrew, Peter, James, and John; for Acts, Paul and Agrippa.

Golden Text Explained

1. Our duty to go. Our text today is a part of what we call the great commission. It is the language of Jesus to his apostles just before he went back to heaven. Since Jesus gave this commission to the apostles, many think the duty of taking the gospel to the whole world does not rest upon us. But in Matthew's account of what Jesus told them we learn that he also told these apostles to teach the baptized to "observe all things whatsoever I commanded you." (Matt. 28: 20.) Since Jesus told the apostles to preach the gospel to the whole creation, and since he told them to teach us to do all he commanded them to do, it follows that he expects us to preach the gospel to the whole creation. There are many reasons why we should do this, (a) The whole world is sick from sin. "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God; they have all turned aside, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not so much as one." (Rom. 3: 10-12.) "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3: 23.) And we know from observation and experience that none live without sin in this land of Bibles and learning. If such is the condition where environment and circumstances are so favorable, what must be the condition of lands where the Bible has never gone and where its standard of morals is unknown? (b) Paul speaks of Christians as having been entrusted with the gospel (1 Thess. 2: 4.), which is the power of God unto salvation to all who will believe (Rom. 1: 16). This gospel is not *one* of God's powers; it is not a part of God's power to save the lost; it is *the power* of God to save the lost. Since all men are lost and since the gospel is God's power to save them, it follows that they will remain lost until and unless we take the gospel to them. And only that portion of the creation to whom we take the gospel can possibly be saved.

If we love our fellowman and if we have an appreciation of the fact that we have been saved by the gospel, we will do all in our power to take the gospel to others that they may have the same blessing, (c) We have the example of Jesus to encourage us. He left heaven and came to this world to seek and save the lost. (Luke 19: 10.) His condescension, his identification of himself with humanity, and his immeasurable sufferings in order to bring salvation to us so far exceed the self-denial and sacrifice required of us to take the gospel to all the world that there is no comparison between the two. If he was willing to do so much for us, we should be willing to make whatever sacrifice is necessary to take the gospel to all. (d) Not only do we have the example of Jesus, but we have his command to preach the gospel to the whole creation. If one will not be moved by his example, surely his command is sufficient force to move us to do what we can. But if neither his example nor his command will move us to preach the gospel to the lost that they may be saved, we need not be surprised when we find ourselves on the left hand in the judgment.

2. Our duty to preach the gospel, (a) Let us first notice what is excluded by this command of the Lord. The philosophies of men are excluded. Jesus did not say for his apostles to go into all the world and preach any man's philosophy of life. The doctrine of social service as a means of world betterment is excluded. Certainly the gospel works a reform of society, but it is more than a program of social betterment. Some men use the pulpit to put over their political programs, but the gospel Jesus told his people to preach excludes such political messages. Others use the pulpit to entertain people. Paul said the time would come when people would not endure sound doctrine, but would turn away their ears from the truth and be turned unto fables. (2 Tim. 4: 3, 4.) And when people make such de-

mands, there are always preachers who will oblige them, (b) Let us now see what is included in the command of Jesus to preach the gospel. First, the gospel of Jesus Christ contains certain great truths which men must believe in order to be saved.

(1) God is. There is no truth more fundamental than this; and there is no salvation for one who refuses to accept this truth. (Heb. 11: 6.) And (2; Jesus Christ is God's Son. Here is another fundamental truth which man must believe in order to be saved from sin. (John 3: 16-18; 8: 24.) And (3) man without God is lost and without hope of ever being saved. This is a truth which much of the intellectual world refuses to accept. It was foolishness to the Greeks of Paul's day. (1 Cor. 1: 22-25.) It is humbling to the proud and mighty who refuse to admit their dependence even to God. And (4) God is a rewarder of all who diligently seek him. (Heb. 11: 6.)

Second, the gospel contains certain great facts which men must believe in order to be saved. (1) God sent his Son into this world. This implies the pre-existence of the Son of God and his submission to the Father to do the will of his Father.

(2) Jesus died for our sins. (1 Cor. 15: 3.) The death of Jesus was not an ordinary death; it meant more than the death of any other man who ever lived. His death made propitiation for our sins; through death he made it possible for the Father to forgive us our sins. (3) He was raised from the dead. This, together with his death, implies his burial which Paul names in his list of facts

of the gospel. (1 Cor. 15: 3-5.) Paul says that we must believe that God raised him from the dead in order to be saved. (Rom. 10: 9.) If God did not raise him from the dead, all men are still in their sins. (1 Cor. 15: 17.) It is quite intellectual in our times for men to say they believe in Jesus Christ, but they do not believe he was born of a virgin or that he was raised from the dead. According to Paul, such people cannot be saved. (4) Jesus reigns on David's throne at the right hand of God. (Acts 2: 29-36.)

Third, the gospel contains certain great promises which must be preached to excite men to love and trust God. (1) The forgiveness of all our sins on condition of obedience to the Lord. (Acts 2: 38.) (2) Acceptance in the family of God and made heirs of God. (Rom. 8: 14-17; Gal. 4: 3-7.) (3) The gift of the Holy Spirit—that is, a gift consisting of the Holy Spirit—as the presence of God within us. (Acts 2: 38; 1 Cor. 6: 19.) And (4) eternal life in heaven with the redeemer and all the redeemed. (Rom. 6: 23; Rev. 21: 1-7.)

Fourth, the gospel contains certain commandments which must be obeyed before one can hope to enjoy the promises contained therein. (1) One must do what the Lord teaches us to do to become a Christian—believe in Christ, repent of sins, confess Jesus as Lord, and be baptized in his name for the remission of sins. (2) One must worship God in spirit and truth. (3) One must keep himself unspotted from the world. And (4) one must serve God faithfully as long as he lives in this world.

Exposition of the Text

I. Jesus Makes Us Fishers of Men

(Mark 1: 16-20)

Passing along by the sea of Galilee.

The Holy Land is noted for its two seas, Galilee and the Dead or Salt Sea. One gives all it receives; the other retains all it receives. Galilee gives and remains fresh; the Dead Sea keeps and is stagnant. Galilee gives all and maintains life; the Dead Sea keeps and supports no life in its waters. Much of the work and teaching of Jesus was done on or near the shores of Galilee. There were nine cities on the shores of Galilee and many others near in the time of our Lord. The sea was thirteen miles long and six miles wide. It was seven hundred feet below sea level and

the climate was always mild. Fishing in its waters was a common and profitable industry.

He saw Simon and Andrew. These were the sons of one John. (John 1: 42.) This is not the first contact these men had with Jesus. Andrew was the first of these two men to see Jesus. Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist and heard John say that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. (John 1: 29.) And the day following Andrew saw Jesus again and was called to follow him. His first thought was of his brother, Simon, whom he found and brought to Jesus. It was at this time that Jesus gave him the name of Cephas, a stone.

(John 1: 42.) Andrew set for us a good example of bringing others to Jesus. We know but very little of his activities in gospel work, but if he never did anything other than bring his brother to the Lord, he did a great work and can be considered as having a part in the saving of all the souls his brother won.

Casting a net in the sea. We are told that the Jews used three different kinds of nets in their fishing. One was our seine, or dragnet; one was a casting-net; and the third was a circular bell-shaped net which was spread over the surface of the water and enclosed anything under it as it sank. This was not a pleasure excursion for these men, for they earned their living by fishing in Galilee. However, on this occasion they had not profited from their efforts, for they had fished all night and had taken nothing. (Luke 5: 5.)

Come ye after me. The men seem not to have understood the first call to be to permanent discipleship, but this time Jesus tells them he is calling them to a work of higher nature and greater importance than that which they were now following. He told them he would make them to become fishers, or catchers, of men. Jesus calls all of us to something higher and more worth while. The farmer who sows the seed and cultivates the plant is called to sow the seed of the kingdom and cultivate the plants in the field of the Lord. The doctor is called to heal broken lives and nurture babes in Christ. The carpenter is called from the building of houses to laying the tried and true foundation and the placing of material on that foundation which will stand the trials by fire. The merchant is called from the purchasing of perishable goods to buy the one pearl of great price.

I will make you to become fishers of men. Any one may catch a fish occasionally, but it takes an expert to catch fish consistently. One must know when they will bite, what they will strike, and how to land them. So Jesus called these men to be with him that he might teach and train them in the art of catching men.

(a) To be successful fishers of men we must know when to approach them with the gospel. Sure, we are to preach the gospel "in season and out of season," but that does not mean that we are to use common sense as to when to approach certain individuals.

(b) We must know what to put on the

gospel hook; we must know the kind of net to use. No, we have no choice but to preach the gospel, but that particular portion of the gospel which will appeal to a certain individual, which will cause him to take the hook, is a matter of first importance. Those who use the same bait and the same methods every time they go fishing will come home empty handed most of the time. So those who use the same lessons and the same methods of approach on every prospect they try to lead to the Lord will fail most of the time, (c) As there is an art in landing a fish, so there is an art in closing with a prospect, or in getting the desired response in gospel obedience. One who gets too anxious to land his fish is likely to lose him, so we can put too much pressure on one we are trying to lead to Jesus. One who gets tired and lays down his pole for a few minutes may find his fish gone when he returns; so carelessness and indifference toward a prospect may cause us to fail to win a soul for the Lord.

James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother. Luke tells us these were partners with Andrew and Simon in the fishing business. (Luke 5: 7.) We cannot keep from noticing the fact that Jesus called these humble fishermen instead of priests, scribes, and rulers among the Jews. He did it because these men, being humble, would take teaching and training. If he had called the religious leaders, they would not have humbled themselves enough to take training from him, a lowly carpenter. Another reason was that the minds of these humble fishermen were not cluttered with false standards and ambitions such as the prominent men of the day.

He called them:—and they went after him. No doubt their friends said these men used poor financial judgment. Some no doubt expressed great sympathy and concern for the welfare of the families of these men. Others likely said these men should give more thought to the evening of their lives; what will they do for support in their old age? But the Master called, and the servants followed; the Master promised all they needed for this life, and the servants trusted. The servants couldn't see all the way to the end of the way, but the Master said he would be with them. The Master is calling still for men humble enough to follow him and free enough from the love of this present world to give their lives to his serv-

ice. Does some one say, Where can I serve? Lift up your eyes to the field. The harvest indeed is plentiful. but the laborers are few.

II. Jesus Appears to Saul of Tarsus (Acts 26: 12-15)

As I journeyed to Damascus. This portion of our text is from Paul's speech before Agrippa wherein he recounts his conversion. He told Agrippa that he used to be opposed to Christianity to the extent that he was willing to be used as a tool of the Jews to persecute the church. And at the time of his conversion he was on the way to Damascus in Syria to find Christians and make them blaspheme so he could put them to death.

I saw on the way a light from heaven. Saul's conversion furnishes unanswerable proof of the divinity of Jesus Christ and of the genuineness of Christianity. He either saw a light and heard the voice of Jesus Christ, or he neither saw nor heard. If he neither saw nor heard, how can we account for his life and teaching afterward? Some say he had an epileptic stroke. This might account for his thinking he saw and heard something, but it certainly does not account for the depth and breadth of his teaching. Others say he made up this story to account for his change. But if he neither saw nor heard what he says he did, there was no sensible reason for his change; why did he wish to change? People who invent stories to cover up their real motives do not stand by those stories through such suffering as Paul endured and in the face of death. If Paul saw and heard Jesus, it follows that Jesus was raised from the dead and is divine and that Christianity is all the Bible claims for it.

Why persecutest thou me? Saul learned at this time and was to teach the lesson later that whatever we do of the Lord's saints we do to him. (1 Cor. 8: 12.) Jesus has so intimately identified himself with his followers that we cannot sin against one of them without sinning against him; nor can we do good to one of them without in that act doing good to him. (Matt. 25: 40, 45.) Saul thought Jesus of Nazareth was an imposter and that he had several years before been put out of the way. He fully expected to use the authority of the chief priests had given him to persecute Christians, not Jesus, in Damas-

cus. Paul remembered certain details of this experience which contribute to its value as good evidence. He says the time of the experience was at midday. This shows us something of the brightness of the light. He said the speaker used the Hebrew language. This would probably account for those with him not understanding what was said. (Acts 22: 9.)

It is hard for thee to kick against the goad. Literature of the time abounds in proof that this was a proverbial expression which meant that it was useless for him to continue his course of persecution. Some have used this to try to prove that Saul's conscience was hurting him on account of his persecution of the saints and that Jesus reminded him that it was hard for him to continue to go against his conscience. As the ox which kicked against the goad applied to urge him on inflicted greater wounds upon himself, so Saul would but hurt himself all the more if he continued to persecute the church. This was a call for Saul to cease his work of persecution which would bring about his utter ruin and to begin to work for the Lord which would bring joy and happiness here and hereafter.

Who art thou, Lord? Some have wondered why Saul would ask who was speaking to him and yet call him Lord. But the word Lord was often used to address one of superior rank. Masters were often called lord by their servants. Saul knew this was not an ordinary person appearing and speaking to him, so he used this term which applies to superior personages.

I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. In his address before the mob in Jerusalem he said that Jesus added the words "of Nazareth" to this statement. (Acts 22: 8b.) It was hardly enough for Jesus to say simply that he was Jesus, for that was a very common name for Jews in that time. But when he said, "I am Jesus of Nazareth," he narrowed down the field so there could be no mistake as to the person under consideration. And there was good reason to mention Nazareth to that crowd of Jews in Jerusalem, while it is easy to see why Agrippa would not have any interest in the city from whence Jesus came.

III. Jesus Sends Saul to Win Souls (Acts 26: 16-19)

To this end have I appeared unto thee. The primary purpose of the

Lord's appearance was not to save Saul of Tarsus. He was told to go into the city and he would be told what he must do to be saved. If Jesus appeared to him for the purpose of saving him, but he does not appear to others, it is next to impossible to see why he is not a respecter of persons.

To appoint thee a minister and a witness. Here we are told the reason for this unusual appearance, (a) His appearance was to make him a minister, a servant. The Greek word used here means a galley-slave, an under-rower. It is the word used to describe the position of John Mark with reference to Paul and Barnabas, and is translated as *attendant*. (b) The appearance was to make Saul a witness of Jesus Christ. The service he was to render was that of an apostle. An apostle had to be an eye-witness of Christ. So Paul quoted the words of Ananias to the Jerusalem audience. "The God of our fathers hath appointed thee to know his will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear a voice from his mouth. For thou shalt be a witness for him unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard." (Acts 22: 14, 15.) This tells us that in order for him to be a witness he had to both see Jesus and hear a word from his mouth. And this agrees with the conditions laid down in Acts 1: 21, 22. If Saul had never seen Jesus after his resurrection, he would not have been qualified as a witness to the fact that he was raised from the dead. Since no one can be an apostle of Jesus Christ who has not seen him after his resurrection, it follows that those who claim to be apostles of Christ today must either claim they have seen him or give up their claims to apostleship.

The things wherein I will appear unto thee. This could mean further miraculous appearances, such as is mentioned in 2 Cor. 12: 1-10, or inspiration for the purpose of revelation of truth, or both. Regardless of its specific meaning, Saul could not but be impressed with the fact that Jesus would make other appearances to him. No doubt this gave him courage to accept the call of his Lord. None should be afraid to accept a call to service when he is assured

of the Lord's presence and help to do the work. Though we have no assurances of miraculous appearances or corporeal presence of the Lord, we are assured that he will be with us even to the end of the world if we serve him.

To open their eyes. Jesus said he would be with Saul to deliver him from his enemies among both Jews and Gentiles to whom he was sending him for the purpose of opening their eyes the eyes of their understanding. To do this it was necessary to teach them the truth. Only the gospel of Christ can open spiritual eyes.

That they may turn from darkness. We notice that this expresses a purpose. Their eyes had to be opened that they might turn from darkness to light. Since the gospel is the only thing which can open spiritual eyes, it follows that no one can turn from darkness to light until the gospel is preached to him.

That they may receive remission of sins. People must turn from darkness to light before they can receive remission of sins, but their eyes must be opened before they can so turn; therefore the gospel must be preached to people so their eyes can be opened so they can turn, so they can receive remission of sins. But people must go "preach the gospel" before these things can happen, so we see how important is the preaching of the gospel. We not only see how important it is, but we should see how pressing is the need of people to "preach the gospel" in every city, county, state, and nation.

And an inheritance. Only those whose eyes are opened, who turn from darkness and receive the remission of their sins, can receive an inheritance, eternal life. If you were without the hope of this inheritance, would you wish that some one would bring the gospel to you? Are you already to practice the golden rule?

I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision. This statement was made many years after his experience on the Damascus road, but Paul could truthfully say that he had not been disobedient to that vision and its instructions. When we come to the end of our way, can we say that we have not been disobedient to our call?

Lessons to Learn

1. Some men go fishing for pleasure, others for life. With the Christian, fishing for men is his life. No one

can live a genuine Christian life who does not fish for men.

2. Paul's call and service for the

Lord constitute a witness, not only in his day, but for all time to come which can neither be refuted nor forgotten by honest men. If one can expose Paul and disprove his testimony, he owes it to the world to do so; if one cannot disprove his testimony, he owes it to himself to accept his teaching.

3. To win people to Christ we must open their eyes by teaching the truth, yet some who do not know enough truth to win souls are satisfied to remain in this ignorance. It may not be shameful to be ignorant, but it is a shame and a disgrace to be willing to remain so ignorant of the truth that we cannot tell people what to do to be saved.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

Can you prove that it is our duty to take the gospel to the whole world?

What condition of the world makes it necessary for us to take the gospel?

What is meant by being entrusted with the people?

What is the connection between love and appreciation and taking the gospel to the world?

How does the example of Jesus teach us to take the gospel to the world?

What does our lesson offer as the fourth reason for taking the gospel to the world?

Name and discuss some things excluded by the command to preach the gospel.

Name and discuss four great truths of the gospel which men must believe.

Name and discuss four great facts of the gospel which men must believe.

Name and discuss four great promises contained in the gospel.

Name and discuss four great commandments contained in the gospel that must be obeyed.

Jesus Makes Us Fishers of Men

What do you know about the Sea of Galilee? Contrast it with the Dead Sea.

Tell of the first contact Jesus had with Simon and Andrew.

What was their occupation? and what do you know about nets used then?

In what way does Jesus call men of each occupation to something nobler?

Can just anybody catch fish or be fishers of men?

Name and discuss three things essential to catching fish or fishing for men.

How does this emphasize the need for

training Christians to fish for men?

Why did Jesus call humble fishermen instead of religious leaders and rulers?

What do you think of the judgment of these men from a financial point of view?

If it was wise in them to leave all and follow Jesus, would the same be wise in us?

Jesus Appears to Saul of Tarsus

Where was Saul of Tarsus when he received his call?

Can you prove the divinity of Jesus and the genuineness of Christianity by the use of Saul's conversion?

What statement in our text shows how closely Jesus identifies himself with his people?

What is meant by, "It is hard to kick against the goad"?

How did Jesus identify himself to Saul?

Why would Paul not be careful to mention Nazareth when speaking to Agrippa?

Jesus Sends Saul to Win Souls

Did Jesus appear to Saul to save him from sins? Why?

What is the meaning of the words minister and witness?

What special qualifications must one have to be an apostle of Jesus?

Did Jesus promise any further appearances to Saul? Can you name one?

What is meant by opening the eyes, and how is it to be done?

The opening of people's eyes is for what purpose?

What do people receive when they turn from darkness to light?

What blessing is promised to those who receive remission of sins?

What does Paul say about the way he had responded to that heavenly vision?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson XII—March 20, 1955

RULES FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

Lesson Text

Luke 6: 27-38

27 But I say unto you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you,

28 Bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you.

29 To him that smiteth thee on the *one* cheek offer also the other; and from him that taketh away thy cloak withhold not thy -coat also.

30 Give to every one that asketh thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

32 And if ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? for even sinners love those that love them.

33 And if ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye? for even sinners do the same.*

34 And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? even sinners lend to sinners, to receive again as much.

35 But love your enemies, and do *them* good, and lend, never despairing; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High: for he is kind toward the unthankful and evil.

36 Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

37 And judge not, and ye shall not be judged: and condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: release, and ye shall be released:

38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom. For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again.

Golden Text.—“Look *therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil*” (Eph. 5: 15, 16.)
Devotional Reading.—Matt. 5: 1-16.

Daily Bible Readings

March 14.	M.....	The Rule in Home Life (Luke 2: 40-52)
March 15.	T.....	The Rule in Personal Life (2 Pet. 3: 14-18)
March 16.	W.....	The Rule in National Life (Rom. 13: 1-7)
March 17.	T.....	The Rule in Work (2 Thess. 3: 6-13)
March 18.	F.....	The Rule in Ownership (1 Cor. 9: 17-23)
March 19.	S.....	The Rule in Accomplishment (Phil. 3: 8-14)
March 20.	S.....	The Rule in Conduct (Eph. 4: 17-27)

TIME.—A.D. 27.

PLACE.—On a mountain near Capernaum.

PERSONS.—Jesus and the multitudes.

Golden Text Explained

1. Reasons for looking: carefully.
(a) Satan is intent on our destruction. Peter tells us that Satan goes about like a lion seeking whom he may devour. (1 Pet. 5: 8.) And we learn from Job's experiences that Satan is continually seeking opportunity and permission to put people on trial. (Job 1.) And Jesus told Peter that Satan had asked to have him that he might sift him as wheat. (Luke 22: 31.) Considering the experience Satan has had in tempting people, the knowledge he must have gained through all these years, and our inexperience and lack of knowledge of his devices, and considering the success he has generally in destroying souls of men, we see why the Lord tells us to look carefully how we walk, (b) The lusts of our flesh are ever present, leading us to do things wrong and to overindulge in things lawful. No doubt we blame the devil for a lot of things for which our own desires are responsible. Desire is ever with us and there is little freedom from the pressure it exerts upon us. The only hope we can have of freedom from this pressure is to crucify the flesh “with the passions and the lusts thereof.” (Gal. 5: 24.) Looking carefully how we walk would include such **crucifixion**, (c) To protect the

good name of the church. Our first two reasons for walking wisely look to our own good. We now turn in the other direction and say that we should walk carefully so we may protect the good name of the church. Our deeds reflect either honor or shame upon the church where we worship. If we prize the good name of the church, we will be willing to deny ourselves of things we desire if our enjoyment of them will hurt the church, (d) To refrain from injuring others. The injury we do to others is counted by the Lord as done to him. (1 Cor. 8: 12.) We may by careless walk and talk do injury to others and so sin against Jesus Christ. If we do not wish to injure him, we should look carefully how we walk. (e) To protect our own eternal interests. The way we live here will determine where we will spend eternity. Eternity is so long, heaven is so wonderful, and hell is so terrible that we should be very careful how we walk and talk while we are traveling toward eternity.

2. What constitutes a wise walk, (a)

The opposite of idleness and indifference. The one-talent man was called “slothful” because he was indifferent to his duty to his master. No one would think he walked carefully or

made good use of his time if any consideration is given to the punishment he was forced to suffer. The unjust steward walked wisely to prepare for his future welfare. (Luke 16: 1-13.) He was anything but idle and indifferent, and so must we be if we walk wisely in these evil days, (b) An impartial attitude toward the commandments of the Lord. It is common practice of people to divide the commandments of the Lord into essential and non-essential; to distinguish between big and little sins. So they are careful to do some things the Lord demands, but careless about doing other things. The parents of John the Baptist were commended for walking in all the commandments of the Lord. (Luke 1: 6.) He who is careful to do the least will also be careful to do all the rest, so let us be impartial in our obedience to the Lord's commandments, (c) The opposite of offensive conduct. Paul was careful to give no occasion of stumbling either to Jew or Greek, seeking not his own profit but the profit of the many. (1 Cor. 10: 32, 33.) If eating meat caused his brother to stumble, he would eat no more meat as long as he lived. (1 Cor. 8: 13.) And Paul told Felix that he exercised himself "to have conscience void of offense toward God and men always." (Acts 24: 16.) Our walk should be considerate and conciliatory at all times toward all people, (d) The opposite of hypocrisy and duplicity. Jesus was less inclined to spare the hypocrites of his day than any other class of people. If he deals with them in judgment as he dealt with them here, and we have every assurance that he will, this is sufficient reason for us to look carefully how we walk lest we drift into that sin which called forth his most scathing rebukes. The press of social and business duties of this complex environment in which we live makes it mighty easy for us to use duplicity, if not real hypocrisy, in our dealings with each other.

3. **Why we should redeem the time.** To redeem time is to use it wisely, to do the greatest possible amount of good, (a) Time is of great value. Empires have been won and lost, fortunes have been made and squan-

dered, lives have been saved and ruined in such short spaces of time that those who think cannot but be impressed with the great value of time, (b) We have little time. Even if we live our threescore and ten, or if by reason of strength and the goodness of God we reach our fourscore, we still have precious little time when we consider the amount of good each Christian should desire to do. Again, when we consider that we are so made that we must use about half our time in rest and proper care of our bodies, so have only half the time allotted us for serving God, we realize more than ever its value. Added to this, practically all of us must use a third of our time, some more, to make a living, and we realize that the time we can use for serving others is cut very short, (c) We cannot recall time. If we fail to use time properly as it is given to us, there is no possibility of recalling it and using it to better advantage. Many have stood on the brink of their graves and wept because they could not turn back time in its flight and make needed improvements. We should use each minute as we would use it if we knew it would be our last. We are so prone to presume on the goodness and mercy of God that we get careless as to how we use time, (d) We must give account of our time. Too little has been said and thought about this. We have been taught that we must give account of our words and deeds, even our thoughts, hence we have formed the habit of being careful about these things. But so little has been said about giving account of the way we use the time allotted to us that we can let it pass unused, unimproved, and wasted without ever thinking that we must answer to the Lord for such careless waste of a precious commodity, (e) The days are evil. Paul gives this as a reason for redeeming the time. We live in evil times; evil is all about us taking souls into bondage and on to hell, so we must use our time in saving them. And the evil about us may cause us to drift away from the Lord if we do not look carefully how we walk. So for our own and the good of others we are to use time properly.

Exposition of the Text

I. **How to Show Our Love (Luke 6: 27-31)**
Love your enemies. Our lesson text

is taken from the sermon on the mount, of which Matthew gives the fullest account. He says, "Ye have

heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy,^M and then goes on to teach love for enemies. The law demanded that the Jews love their neighbors, but did not in so many words teach them to hate their enemies. However the Jews were not wholly unjustified in interpreting the law to teach them to hate their enemies. They were forbidden by the law to make peace with the seven nations of Canaan, and they were to wage war against them to the point of extinction. (Ex. 34: 11-16, Deut. 7: 2; 23: 6.) Even David by inspiration expressed anything but a disposition to love his enemies. (Psalm 137: 8, 9; 139: 21, 22.) The superiority of the gospel over the law is demonstrated here as well as it is anywhere else.

Do good to them that hate you. Some have trouble understanding what Jesus meant by telling us to love our enemies, because they feel it is next to impossible, if not quite so, to have the same feelings toward them as we have for our families and dearest friends. God does not have the same feelings toward all men. (2 Cor. 9: 7; Eph. 5: 1.) Jesus did not feel the same way toward all people. (John 11: 3; 13: 23.) No one can think seriously that Jesus had exactly the same feelings for Judas that he had for John and Lazarus and his sisters. The language of the above texts means nothing if he did. So we are striving for the impossible and that which Jesus himself did not have if we are striving to have the same attitude toward all men. But Jesus prayed for those who crucified him. (Luke 23: 34.) He gave the good Samaritan as an example of loving one's neighbor. We can do good to them that hate us; we can pray for their conversion and general welfare, and in this way do all that the Lord intends by loving them.

To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek. Shall we take this literally to the letter? Jesus himself did not offer his other cheek when an officer struck him and asked him to tell him who did it. (John 18: 22.) Instead of offering the other cheek, Jesus mildly but firmly, rebuked the man for doing so. Paul did not follow the letter of this statement when he was struck in the face by one of the court on Jerusalem. (Acts 23: 3.) And he was not so mild in his rebuke of the one who commanded this ill treatment. But the meaning of the

teaching is obvious: we are not to retaliate or seek revenge on those who mistreat us, especially where the suffering is for the sake of Christ and his church. And if one feels that following this teaching to the very letter would do good to the one smiting, it would be well to turn the other cheek and take the blow in submission. But that it is one's duty under every circumstance the actions of both Jesus and Paul deny.

From him that taketh away thy cloak. Luke tells us if one would take our *cloak* we are to let him have our *coat* also. Matthew reverses the order of the two and says if one sues us at law for our *coat* we are to let him have the *cloak* also. The *cloak* was a long outer garment, more costly than the *coat*, which could be used as cover at night and for this reason could not be held as surety for payment of debts. (Ex. 22: 26, 27.) Here again we doubt if the slavish following of the letter is demanded, but non-resistance to those who would do one evil is the lesson. Some think that the value of articles involved would make a difference. As Paul would allow a man to slap him in the face, but would not allow men to take his life without an appeal to the law for help, so we are to let people take things of small value from us without resistance, but have right to go to law to protect a home, farm, or business. McGarvey takes his position. (Fourfold Gospel, p. 245.), but this writer doubts if it is justified.

Give to every one that asketh thee. And there are limitations to this instruction. Paul says we are not to feed a man who will not work. (2 Thess. 3: 10.) And Jesus tells us in this same sermon, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before the swine." (Matt. 7: 6.) There are some who are so obviously unworthy of assistance that we would waste the Lord's substance were we to give to them when we can give to others who might be led to receive the truth.

As ye would that men should do to you. Jesus tells us to let our desires be the standard by which we are to judge what we will do for others. Just do to others as we wish them to do for us. This rule is positive in its nature and requires that we do something for others; and that something is what we would want them to do for us if we were in their cir-

cumstance and they in ours. (See Golden Text, Lesson I.)

II. Be Impartial in Your Love (Luke 6: 32-35)

If ye love them that love you. The word *only* should be inserted here to get the full sense of his meaning; If ye love *only* them that love you, what thank have ye? Even people who are not under the influence of God love people who love them. Only when we love them that persecute us and hate us, in addition to loving them that love us, do we prove the worth of Christianity and the influence of the gospel in our lives. In this is seen the superiority of Christianity over both the standards of the world and of the law of Moses. And it is such standards as this that make Christianity attractive to men.

If ye do good to them that do good to you. Here again we must insert the word *only*. There are four planes on which we may pitch our conduct,

(a) Return good for good and evil for evil. This is usually the world's standard, but has nothing about it to commend it to us. (b) Return evil for good. This is the lowest and basest standard by which one's conduct can be determined: it is of the devil, (c) Return good for evil. This is the highest standard by which one can determine his conduct; it is of the Lord, (d) Be entirely passive, make no response at all; neither return good for good nor evil for evil, nor return evil for good nor good for evil; do absolutely nothing. Do we not follow this course when we fail to appreciate the good others do us? Do we not follow this course when we fail to return good for evil, even though we do not retaliate?

If ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive. Jesus is legislating against selfishness in these verses and against partiality in our Christian activities. The only use some people have for others is determined by what they can get out of them. As long as people can be of any use or profit to them they are friendly with them, but the day one ceases to be worth anything to them in accomplishing their unholy, selfish purposes they cease to be friendly with them. The spirit is holy un-Christian and Jesus directs this teaching against it. We are to cultivate the spirit of unselfishness in all we do so that we may rise above the standards of the world and attract people to the Christ who served

so unselfishly that he gave his life with no thought of profit to himself.

Do them good, and lend. There was much more need for this teaching in the time of our Lord than now, especially in the matter of the necessities of life. We have a better supply of doctors and hospitals to take care of the sick; better banking and money lending services to take care of the man who is behind with his obligations; and better credit systems for men to provide daily bread for their families. Jesus talked about lending a man one's cloak or coat, lending him food to keep a family from immediate hunger. One was not to pass by his enemy in such distress, but to lend to him with no thought of what he had done to hurt one, or whether he would ever be able to lend to one in his hour of need.

Ye shall be sons of the Most High. To all who will follow the course Jesus recommends in this lesson Jesus promises a great reward. He told Peter that no man could sacrifice anything for the sake of the gospel who would not receive a hundredfold in this life and in the world to come eternal life. (Mark 10: 30.) But he not only promises this great reward, he tells us we shall be recognized as sons, children, of the Most High. The honor that comes from being children of God, the peace and joy we know as his children, and the hope we entertain of living in eternity with him because we are his children are far more than enough to move us to live as Jesus directs even though it entails hardships and sufferings.

He is kind toward the unthankful and evil. He makes the rain to fall and the sun to shine on both the good and the evil, the thankful and unthankful. If we wish to be like God, we must be impartial in our love and goodness. No one can choose a better pattern or a loftier standard than that of God as revealed in his Son Jesus Christ. I. We Determine Our Own Treat-

ment (Luke 6: 36-38)

Be ye merciful. We are told to be

merciful because our heavenly Father is full of mercy and compassion. If we are merciful to others, he will deal mercifully with us. (James 2: 13.) Jesus tells of a servant who owed his master a great sum which he could not pay. The master forgave him the debt because he was

moved with compassion. Then the servant went out and found a fellow-servant who owed him a small sum and put him in prison because he could not pay the debt. The master of this unrighteous and unmerciful servant called him and rebuked him for his lack of mercy and put him in prison. Jesus concluded by saying, "So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts." (Matt. 18: 35.) From this we conclude that we determine the treatment which we shall receive from the Lord in judgment.

Judge not. The judging of this passage is rather limited when compared to all the teaching of the Bible on the subject. Here is some judging not forbidden by it. (a) Apostles judging the people of God. (Matt. 19: 28.) (b) The judgment of the church against ungodly members. (1 Cor. 5: 12.) (c) Our judgment with reference to the sacredness of a day. (d) We are told to judge righteous judgment. (John 7: 24.) We are told that we can know people by their fruits, but this involves a judgment which we must exercise. The judgment condemned in our text is rash, censorious, and unjust judgment, the disposition to look unfavorably on the character and actions of others, which leads invariably to the pronouncing of rash, unjust, and unlovely judgments upon them.

And ye shall not be judged. Here again we are reminded that we determine our own treatment both at the hands of others and of God. If we refrain from dealing in harsh, unkind judging of others, they will refrain from so judging us. There may be some exceptions to this rule in the case of wicked men who will persecute us for the sake of our relation to Christ, but this is the general rule. If we are merciful in our judgment of others, God will be merciful in his judgment of us; but if we show no mercy in our judgment of others, he will show no mercy in dealing with us in judgment.

And ye shall not be condemned. This applied especially to the Jews in their attitude toward the Gentiles. They condemned a whole nation of people, not because they were as in-

dividuals unworthy, but simply because they were members of a despised nation. The practice of condemning whole groups of people today on account of race, color, social, financial, or political conditions is a practice to which no one in the likeness of God can stoop.

And it shall be given unto you. This promise is made on the condition that we give. If we are free and liberal with what we possess, we can expect others to be of the same mind toward us. God loves the cheerful giver and will make all grace abound toward him that he may have a sufficiency and may abound in every good work. (2 Cor. 9: 7, 8.) The stingy man prevents both good people and the Lord doing for him what they would otherwise gladly do.

Good measure, pressed down. These terms describe the generosity with which men shall give unto us. But it is to be remembered that we determine the measure. If we do not give good measure, we will not receive good measure; if we do not press down when filling the bushel, neither will others press down when filling our bushel.

Shaken together. This refers to filling a box or bushel basket with fruit or vegetables. All who have had experience know that the basket will hold more of it if shaken. The shaking causes the fruit or vegetables to lie closer together. The liberal man will shake his basket when he is filling it; the stingy man will refuse to shake it. Jesus says if we are liberal hearted enough to shake the basket, men will do the same for us; but if we are so stingy we will not shake the basket, men will not do so for us.

For with what measure ye mete. This is the concise statement of the principle he has been teaching throughout this section of our lesson. Clarke tells us that these same words are found in the Jerusalem Targum, or commentary, on Gen. 38:26. So Jesus was not teaching them a new principle, but he was giving it applications which brought it closer home and showed them how far they had been missing the point and how far beneath the standard they had been living.

Lessons to Learn

1. We cannot hate a person and pray earnestly for him at the same time. Prayer is the cure for hatred

and enmity. Try it next time you are inclined to hate some one.

2. Forgetting and completely leav-

ing out of our circle of activities those who do not love us is, perhaps, the greatest sin of the average church member today. We do not retaliate or take vengeance, but neither do we love them enough to include them in our prayers and our social activities that we may teach them to love us.

3. Giving that others may give back to us can become a mere mercenary exercise and result in no profit spiritually or financially to the giver. But free, liberal giving for the joy of helping others and honoring God will always result in exceeding great profit both financially and spiritually as our need requires.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

State and discuss five reasons for looking carefully how we walk.

Name and discuss four things which constitute a wise walk.

What do you know of the value of time?

What can you say about the amount of time we have for doing good?

How many times can we use one certain hour?

How is the use of our time related to the judgment?

What do evil days have to do with the value of time?

How to Show Our Love

In what way did the law of Moses teach the Jews to hate their enemies?

Is God's love for all men of the same kind or degree?

Did Jesus while on earth love all men to the same degree?

How does Jesus teach us to love our enemies?

Did Jesus and Paul turn the other cheek when men slapped them?

What is the meaning of turning the other cheek?

Are we to allow men to take things of small value, but resist their taking things of great value from us?

What limitations are placed on us when giving to them that ask of us?

Can you state and give a practical application of the golden rule?

Be Impartial in Your Love

How can we show the superiority of Christianity over the law of Moses and the standards of men?

Can you state and illustrate the four planes on which we may pitch our conduct?

What do you think of friendship for personal profit?

What did Jesus teach about lending to your enemies?

Does this apply to lending money for investment purposes?

What rewards did Jesus promise to those who follow this course of action?

What other inducement did Jesus give to get us to live by these standards?

Whom did Jesus use as our pattern for kindness to the unthankful?

We Determine Our Own Treatment

How did Jesus illustrate the lack of mercy?

What determines whether our treatment in the judgment will be with mercy?

Is all judging forbidden by Jesus? Illustrate your answer.

Is it possible that those who refrain from judging might be judged by evil men?

How did the Jews violate the teaching of Jesus about condemning?

Is there a possibility of our violating this rule against condemning?

What is promised the liberal giver?

What is the picture suggested by shaking things together?

Can you repeat the principle Jesus gave and which is illustrated by these examples given in our lesson?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson XIII—March 27, 1955

FELLOWSHIP IN WORSHIP

Lesson Text

Psalm 122: 1-9; Heb. 10: 22-25

1 I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of Je-ho'-vah.

2 Our feet are standing Within thy gates, O Je-ru'-sa-lem,

3 Je-ru'-sa-lem, that art builded As a city that is compact together;

4 Whither the tribes go up, even the tribes of Je-ho'-vah, For an ordinance for Is'-ra-el, To give thanks unto the name of Je-ho'-vah.

5 For there are set thrones for judgment, The thrones of the house of David.

6 Pray for the peace of Je-ru'-sa-

lem: They shall prosper that love thee.

7 Peace be within thy walls, And prosperity within thy palaces.

8 For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee.

9 For the sake of the house of Je-ho'-vah our God I will seek thy good.

22 Let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience: and having our body washed with pure water.

23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not; for he is faithful that promised:

24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works:

25 Not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting *one another*; and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh.

Golden Text.—“Not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is.” (Heb. 10: 25.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—Rev. 7: 9-17.

Daily Bible Readings

March 21. M.....	The House of God (Psalm 122)
March 22. T.....	Example of the Early Church (Acts 2: 39-47)
March 23. W.....	Reading the Bible (Neh. 8: 1-8)
March 24. T.....	Fellowship through Prayer (Matt. 6: 5-15)
March 25. F.....	Fellowship through Service (1 John 3: 13-34)
March 26. S.....	Worship Commanded (Rev. 22: 6-9)
March 27. S.....	Rules of Acceptable Worship (John 4: 21-26)

TIME.—For Psalms, about 1040 B.C.; for Hebrews, about A.D. 63

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—For Psalms, David; for Hebrews, perhaps Paul.

Golden Text Explained

1. God is there. The assembling together under consideration is any assembly for worship of God. We are to realize the value of fellowship in worship of God and the study of his word, and we are to prize it so highly that we will avail ourselves of every opportunity we have for such fellowship. There are several reasons why we should take advantage of every opportunity for assembling ourselves together and at the top of the list is the fact that God has promised to be in our midst. God has always represented himself as dwelling in the midst of his people. Even in Old Testament times he said, “For Jehovah thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy, that he may not see an unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee.” (Deut. 23: 14.) Again, “For I, saith Jehovah, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and I will be the glory in the midst of her.” (Zech. 2: 5.) And in Psalm 46: 5 we are told, “God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God will help her, and that right early.” Then in the New Testament we are told that the church is the temple of God (1 Cor. 3: 16, 17); the habitation of God in the Spirit (Eph. 3: 21). In the church we are children of God and rejoice in the truth that he is our Father. (2 Cor. 6: 18.) And the greatest joy to which the Christian may look forward in heaven is to be in the presence of God when the tabernacle of God shall

be among men and he shall be their God and wipe away all tears from their eyes and take away death and its train of sorrow and suffering. (Rev. 21: 3, 4.) Since God has promised to be present in our assemblies and accept our worship, we should be glad when men say, “Let us go unto the house of Jehovah.”

2. **Jesus is there.** Speaking of such assemblies as that mentioned in our text, Jesus said, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matt. 18: 20.) If some one could convince you that Jesus could be seen and heard in a certain church house at a certain time, would you be there? If the hour happened to be when you are busy at the shop or office, would you ask the boss to let you off so you could see and hear Jesus? Surely no one would miss such an opportunity to see and hear Jesus regardless of the cost or trouble. He promises to be in every meeting of his disciples, if they meet in his name. But, says one, he is not there in physical form. Do we walk by faith? or by sight? If we walk by faith, his spiritual presence will mean just as much to us as his physical presence. This is a difficult principle to grasp and realize as fully as we should. It is a goal toward which we are to strive. We need to give a lot of time and thought and prayer to the cultivation of a proper realization of his presence, to learn how to realize and enjoy his spiritual presence with us. When you leave the place of worship.

do you carry with you such fond memories as you feel sure you would carry with you if Jesus had been there in the flesh and had preached the sermon? Perhaps none of us can truthfully answer that in the affirmative; yet the Lord wishes us to cultivate such an enjoyment of his spiritual presence with us that we will so cherish the experiences of the hour of worship. And when we so cultivate our appreciation of his presence, we will not wish to miss any gathering of the saints.

3. **The children of God are there.** Christian fellowship is very necessary to our spiritual development. To illustrate our need of Christian fellowship some one has said that we are like a bed of live coals of fire. If one is removed from the bed and left alone for a long time, it cools, losing its light and warmth. But if it is put back in the bed, it regains its light and warmth. So a Christian who stays away from the assembly loses the light and warmth which he is to shed upon the world about him. But if that person can be induced to partake of the Christian fellowship enjoyed in the assembly of the saints, he will regain the light and warmth every Christian should have. We are social beings. And there is a social side to Christianity. We learn of the welfare of the brethren in the assembly; we learn who is ill and in need of our prayers and assistance. We have opportunity before and after the period of worship to exchange a few words of greeting and encouragement. We establish new ties of friendship and cultivate old friendships. It is good to be with brothers and sisters in the family of God the same as it is good for families in the flesh to get together occasionally.

4. **Food for our souls is there,** (a) Food makes us grow and become strong; it keeps the mature strong. Babies in Christ have to take food to grow strong spiritually. That is the reason there are many among us

now who are not strong enough to stand for plain preaching and condemnation of sin both in doctrine and practice in the religious world about us. The mature need to continue to take food that they may remain strong in the faith. They can get this food in the assemblies of the saints where the word of God is taught, (b) The word of God taught in these assemblies keeps us from sin. David said he stored up the word of God in his heart that he might not sin against God. (Psalm 119: 11.) People who never read or hear taught the word of God cannot live as free from sin as they could live if they would attend assemblies where it is taught. All of us need to be reminded of our duty; we need the encouragement that comes from exhortations based upon the word of God. (c) We receive correction in the assembly. The word of God reproves, rebukes, and corrects our lives. We are prone to be careless, to drift from the right path. The influence of the world about is to lead us away from that which is right. The cold indifference of the worldly people with whom we are forced to associate in the shop and office has a tendency to cool our fervor and cause us to leave our first love. The teaching and worship afforded in the assembly will correct these tendencies and send us out renewed in strength and determination to live for God. That is one reason why the Lord *required* us to assemble as often as once a week. If we assembled only once a year, we would drift too far between meetings. The midweek meeting and other nights devoted to study and prayer give added safety which all of us need to keep on the right path. And since God, Jesus Christ, and our brothers and sisters in Christ are there, why should one not wish to be there? Surely no one can give a good reason for not wishing to be there more than he wishes to be anywhere enjoying the things of this world.

Exposition of the Text

I. Pleasure in Going to the House of God (Psalm 122: 1-5)

I was glad when they said. There is great difference of opinion as to the author of this psalm, the time it was written and the purpose for which it was written. Adam Clarke thinks it was written at the time of the return of the Jews from Babylon and

for the purpose of celebrating their joy at returning to Jerusalem that they might worship. However the psalm is expressly ascribed to David, and we see no need for departing from this ancient ascription. No doubt, David was expressing his own sentiments of joy for the privilege of going to the house of God for worship,

and yet it is also obvious that he wishes to lead all who may read the psalm to join with him in that soul-thrilling pleasure. We might give this a present-day application that will cause many of us to search our hearts. When the elders announced there would be a protracted series of meetings for a week, or two weeks, did your soul thrill with joy? Were you glad of the privilege of going to the house of worship every night for two weeks? Or did you think of all those radio and television programs and those social gatherings you attend each week and enjoy so much and feel regret that you will have to miss them? Or maybe when the announcement was made you said in your heart, Others may come, but I am not going to give up my regular schedule of activities to come to that meeting every night. If this is the way you feel about it, maybe you better rethink these matters; it is entirely possible that you would be bored to tears if you were immediately translated to heaven.

Our feet are standing within thy gates. David now views Jerusalem as the home of the house of God and therefore the dwelling place of God. He is happy that he can stand within the gates of the city where God dwells. He feels there is safety as long as he is in the city where God dwells. He feels exalted that he has the privilege of being in the city where God dwells. Not every one in his day enjoyed that privilege. So not all in the world have the privilege of learning of God and dwelling in his house, the church in our time. The only reason all have not this opportunity is that we do not take the gospel to them. We should not be satisfied to enjoy this exalted privilege without doing all we can to share it with those less fortunate than we. Do you remember those who are so unfortunate in your prayers and in your prosperity?

As a city that is compact together. On account of the terrain Jerusalem was built compactly; houses were so close together that they seemed as one building. When viewing it from a distance, it looked a city that is compacted together. This contributed to its strength and endurance in times of attack. Paul speaks of the church as the body of Christ "fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth," making the increase of the body unto the building

up of itself in love. (Eph. 4: lb; Christians derive strength by being bound together in the bonds of love and appreciation.

To *give thanks unto the name of Jehovah.* To give thanks unto the name of Jehovah simply means to give thanks to Jehovah. David views people as finding great joy in going up to the house of Jehovah to give thanks to him. And indeed when we give some time to thinking of his goodness, mercy, and love so bountifully showered upon us, none of us lack reason for giving thanks to his holy name. It is good to count our blessing daily that we may have cause for thanksgiving to keep alive our feeling of gratitude and appreciation. Otherwise we become selfishly satisfied to live a life of ingratitude

The thrones of the house of David. David speaks of these as the thrones of judgment in the house of God. This pictures Jerusalem as a place where the people could come for righteous judgment. They were not oppressed by the judge; no bribes were accepted by the judge to favor the rich against the pleas of the poor. "David reigned over all Israel; and David executed justice and righteousness unto all his people." (2 Sam. 8: 15.) And in this same connection, verse 18. we are told that "David's sons were chief ministers." His sons had a part in seeing that the people were judged properly. One of his sons, Absalom, abused his privileges and aspired to his father's position and lost his life in the attempt. In the church the apostles sit on thrones judging the people of God (Matt. 19: 28). and since their judgment came by inspiration we are assured of righteous judgment.

II. David Asks All to Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122 6-9)

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. David thought that the prayers of the people for Jerusalem's peace would do good. There is ground for wondering today if the average church member believes in prayer. We would not think of conducting public worship without including prayer, but so many people will conduct the affairs of their homes without ever offering up a prayer. If prayer for the peace of a city would do good, why would it not be well to pray for the peace of our homes? Do we ever pray for the peace and unity of the church⁹

Or do we wait until the church is torn by strife and contention to begin to pray for it? Prayers offered by all for the continued peace and unity of the church will make it unnecessary for us to pray that the wounds of strife and contention be healed. When people live lives of prayer and live so that their prayers are effectual, there is every assurance that peace and unity will prevail.

They shall prosper that love thee. David conceived of himself and others as being so closely identified with Jerusalem that her peace meant their prosperity. Those who loved Jerusalem enough to pray for her peace would prosper, but those who did not so love her would not prosper. Here again we can make a spiritual application of this principle to us today. If we love the church enough to pray and work for her peace, we will prosper, but if we do not so love the church, we will not prosper spiritually. Our spiritual growth and progress depend on our attitude toward the church of the Lord. People cannot neglect the church, neglect to attend its periods of worship and take part in its work, and expect to grow and prosper spiritually. People who refuse to go to more than one period of worship a week should not expect to prosper very much spiritually, since they do not put much time, effort, interest, or prayer into the work and worship of the Lord.

For my brethren and companions' sakes. David would pray that "peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces," not merely for his own pleasure, but for the sake of his brethren and companions. This was an unselfish desire on his part. He found joy and pleasure in seeking the peace and prosperity of others and in contributing to their happiness. So we should pray for the peace and prosperity of the church today, not simply that we may enjoy that peace and quiet, or that we may have a comfortable and quiet place of worship, but for the sake of other's salvation and edification. If the church is torn by division and confusion, some may be lost who would otherwise have been saved; some may never come to hear the gospel who would otherwise have heard and obeyed the gospel of the Son of God. So for the sake of our brethren and companions we are to pray and work

for the peace and prosperity of spiritual Zion.

I *will now say, Peace be within thee.* David is determined to do his part to bring to pass that which he desires. Some people want the church to be at peace and accomplish a lot for the Lord, but they do not wish to assume their portion of the responsibility. David was not a member of the "parasite club." He would not enjoy the peace and prosperity of Jerusalem without doing what he could to assure its peace and prosperity. It would be fine if every member of the church of our Lord felt that way about it now. He not only wishes to do his part, but by doing so he would set a good example for others to follow. None of us is so insignificant but that he has one or more followers who look to him for direction and encouragement. So, as David wanted his example to be for the good of Jerusalem, all of us should wish our example to be for the peace of the church.

For the sake of the house of Jehovah. Since the house of Jehovah was located in Jerusalem, David felt a special obligation to pray and work for the peace and prosperity of Jerusalem. We should be willing to do many things which inconvenience us and cause us much self-denial for the sake of the church of the Lord. Love for the church will cause us to forego many liberties and privileges to which we may feel entitled if our enjoyment of these things will bring reproach upon the church. No member of the church should be able to get any pleasure from doing a thing which will hurt the church.

III.. Provoking: One Another to Love and Good Works (Heb. 10: 22-25)

Let us draw near with a true heart. As the people under the law could approach God only after atonement and offerings had been made, so we are not to draw near on account of any goodness or worthiness of our own. But our offering has been made in the body of Jesus on the cross and his blood in the most holy place not made with hands, in heaven itself. (Heb. 9: 24.) So we are now able to draw near since there is no hindrance as a lack of sufficient atonement or of an efficient priest to make our approach acceptable. But this approach which we make depends not only on the proper offer-

ing by the proper priest, but it depends on the condition of our hearts. We must approach him with a true heart, one free from all guile and hypocrisy.

In fulness of faith. The ordinary comment on this is that one must approach God in the faith of the gospel, and that is true; but that is too general to meet the needs of this verse. It refers to faith in the atonement, the offering of Jesus which makes it possible for us to approach God. Verse 22 is prefaced upon two things stated in verses 19 and 21. First, having boldness to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus; second, having a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near "in fulness of faith." So the faith spoken of in this verse is faith in the blood of Jesus and in him as priest to make our approach to God possible.

Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience. The use of blood has always been associated with sin and forgiveness. Even in the days of Abel blood offerings were demanded. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission. (Heb. 9: 22.) Sin separates us from God and makes our approach to God impossible until it is taken away. Since nothing less than the blood of Jesus can take that sin away, it follows that we cannot draw near to God until we have been cleansed by that blood. The blood of the old covenant was applied by sprinkling. (Heb. 9: 19-22.) So the blood of the new covenant is said to be sprinkled on our hearts. This is a figurative expression. There is no literal blood sprinkled on a literal heart. The meaning is that through the blood of Jesus and its merit we are made fit to approach God because God's forgiveness on account of its merit has taken from us all consciousness of sin.

Our body washed with pure water. Both blood and water were used to fit the priests under the old covenant to do service in the house of God, so both blood and water are required to fit one to serve and worship God under the new covenant today. The law specifically states that the priests were washed with water (Lev. 8: 6) and that blood was sprinkled on them and their garments (Lev. 8: 30). No one dared to leave off either the blood

or the water under the old covenant. Our bodies are washed in pure water only in Christian baptism. (John 3: 5; Eph. 5: 26; Tit. 3: 5.) So our hearts are sprinkled with the blood of Jesus when his blood is accepted by the Father in our behalf, and our bodies are washed in pure water when we are baptized. And no God-fearing person will be satisfied to leave off either the blood or the water. We have no more right to try to approach God without being baptized than a priest had to enter the holy place without being washed. It is in place to say here that the Greek word for *wash, lous*, in this verse is one that means the washing of the whole of anything. The Greek has another word, *nipto*, for use when a part, such as face, hands, or feet, is washed. And this word is used when Paul was told to wash away his sins. The whole body is washed in baptism.

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope. When they became Christians, they had confessed that they had hope of eternal life. Now Paul exhorts them to hold fast to that confession in spite of the temptations and persecutions which they were suffering. This letter was written to bolster their faith in the face of unusual persecutions to keep them from giving up their hope and going back into Judaism.

To provoke unto love and good works. They were to stir up or excite one another to continue to love the Lord and his church and to continue in good works. They needed to encourage one another and to look after each other's welfare. If a weak member should be neglected too long, he might slip back into the world so far as to be lost.

Not forsaking our own assembling. This was one way of drawing near, as we are exhorted to do in verse 22, for fellowship and communion with the Lord. Some have the idea that this verse says "our assembling for the Lord's supper." But the purpose of the assembly is not stated. However we may be sure the assembly for the Lord's supper is included, as well as all assemblies for Christian fellowship and the worship of God. Human nature being the same in all ages, there were some in that day who were forsaking the assembly for worship. That this is wrong and

dangerous is implied in the fact that the writer urges exhortations to keep them from doing so.

As ye see the day drawing nigh. There is considerable difference of opinion as to what day was in the mind of the writer. First, it was a day which that generation could see approaching, and the very sight, or knowledge, of its approach was to make them all the more urgent in their exhortations to the weak and and unfaithful. That they could see the day of the coming of Christ approaching is hardly conceivable, so we think it does not refer to that day. Second, some think the day intended is the Lord's day, which they think the writer had in mind for the assembly. In the first place, we have said the assemblies are not restricted to the Lord's day. Next, it is inconceivable that we should exhort one

another "so much the more" on Saturday than on the Wednesday before. Jesus had foretold the destruction of Jerusalem and the dangers connected therewith to the saints. (Matt. 24.) Since the destruction of the city would bring unusual hardships on the saints, especially with reference to assembling themselves for worship, there was need for special exhortations. They were to continue these assemblies right on through that period for the sake of the encouragement and added strength to be received from them. If this be not the day the writer had in mind, this writer prefers to think it means the day of death. And certainly the day of our death when we shall go to meet our Maker and Judge is a day for which the greatest preparation through work and worship should be made.

Lessons to Learn

1. If we derive more pleasures and satisfaction from a ball game or a picture show than we do from attending prayer meeting, it is time for a serious spiritual "check-up" to learn why this unhealthy condition.

2. We should pray and work to maintain the peace and prosperity of the church so we will not have to pray and work to restore the church

to peace and prosperity.

3. Forsaking the assembling of the saints is a sign of spiritual illness caused by fear of persecution or ridicule, lack of interest in things divine, excessive interest in things of the world as pleasure or business, or a lack of knowledge of our duty, or some other thing just as displeasing to God

Questions for the Class

- What is the topic of the lesson?
- Repeat the golden text from memory.
- Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.
- Golden Text Explained
- Where does God dwell with reference to his people?
- What is the greatest joy to which Christians look forward in heaven?
- What did Jesus promise where two or three are gathered in his name?
- Should the spiritual presence of Jesus thrill us as much as his physical presence?
- Can you illustrate the necessity of Christian fellowship?
- What social advantages may be had in assemblies for worship?
- Why do assemblies contribute to our spiritual strength?
- Why does attendance at these assemblies keep us from sin?
- What is the advantage of frequent assemblies over annual assemblies?
- Pleasure in Going to the House of God
- What do you know of the author and time of this psalm?
- In what does this psalm teach us that David found especial joy?
- What application can you make of this reference to the church?
- Why was David glad to stand in the same city in which God dwelt?
- What should be our attitude toward those who do not have church privileges?

- What advantage comes to Christians from their being bound together in love?
- What blessing comes to those who count their blessings?
- What is meant by the thrones of the house of David?

David Asks All to Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem

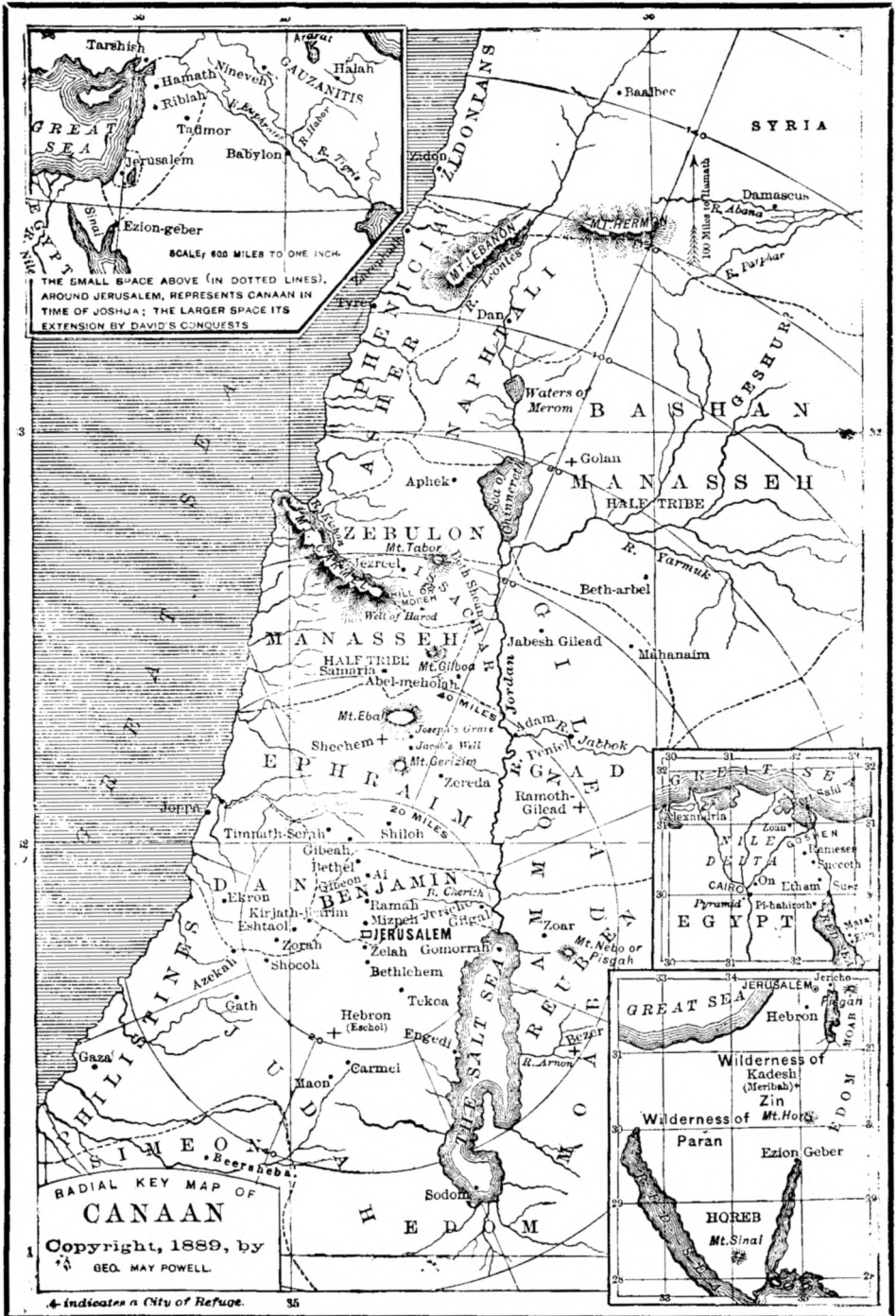
- What evidence do we have in this psalm that David believed in prayer?
- What reason can you give why our homes should be places of frequent prayer?
- What is the connection between love for the church and spiritual prosperity?
- What statement in this psalm shows David's unselfishness?
- Give reasons why we should pray for the peace and unity of the church.
- Can you give proof from this psalm that David did not belong to the "parasite club"?
- Can you show that David was concerned about his example to others?
- What does our lesson teach we should be willing to do for the sake of the church?

Provoking One Another to Love and Good Works

- What is meant by the true heart of our text?
- What makes it possible for us to draw near to God?
- What is the object of the faith mentioned in our text?

How long has the use of blood been associated with sin?
What is meant by sprinkling our hearts with blood?
Can you show a parallel between getting priests ready for service in the holy place and our preparation for worship and service in the church?
What action of baptism is implied in the word wash in our text?

To what were these people to provoke one another? Why?
Does the writer mention any special assembly which we are not to forsake?
Do you think the day mentioned in this text is the day of judgment? Why?
Do you think it is the Lord's day? Why?
Do you think the day refers to the destruction of Jerusalem? Why?
What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?



RADIAL KEY MAP OF CANAAN

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* indicates a City of Refuge.

SECOND QUARTER

THE PERIOD OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

AIM.—To enable the student to learn outstanding historical facts concerning the Israelite Monarchy, and to see a demonstration of the truth that "righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14: 34.)

Lesson I—April 3, 1955

ISRAEL DEMANDS A KING

Lesson Text

1 Sam. 8: 1-10

1 And it came to pass, when Sam'-u-el was old, that he made his sons judges over Is'-ra-el.

2 Now the name of his first-born was Jo'-el; and the name of his second, A-bi'-jah: they were judges in Be'-er-she'-ba.

3 And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted justice.

4 Then all the elders of Is'-ra-el gathered themselves together, and came to Sam'-u-el unto Ra'-mah;

5 And they said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.

6 But the thing displeased Sam'-u-el, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Sam'-u-el prayed unto Je'-ho'-vah.

7 And Je'-ho'-vah said unto Sam'-u-el, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not be king over them.

8 According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of E'-gypt even unto this day, in that they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.

9 Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit thou shalt protest solemnly unto them, and shalt show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

10 And Sam'-u-el told all the words of Je'-ho'-vah unto the people that asked of him a king.

Golden Text.—"And Jehovah said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king" (1 Sam. 8: 22.)

Devotional Reading.—Deut. 17: 14-20.

Daily Bible Readings

March 28. M.....Birth of Samuel (1 Sam. 1: 12-20)
 March 29. T.....Samuel Dedicated to the Lord (1 Sam. 1: 21-28)
 March 30. W.....Samuel's Vision and Call (1 Sam. 3: 1-10)
 March 31. T.....Revival Under Samuel (1 Sam. 7: 1-13)
 April 1. F.....Evil Conditions in Israel (1 Sam. 8: 1-4)
 April 2. S.....Israel Asks for a King (1 Sam. 8: 5-9)
 April 3. S.....Samuel Warns the People (1 Sam. 8: 10-17)

Time.—1112 to 1095 B.C.

Place.—Ramah.

Persons.—Samuel, his sons, and the elders of Israel.

Golden Text Explained

1. Man's Ways are not God's ways. The people of Israel wanted a king like the kings of the nations about them; they wanted to be like other people. They thought they knew what was best for them; but, like inexperienced children, they wanted something which was not for their good. God was their king, and such

men as Gideon, Jephthah, and Samuel were God's representatives to reveal his will to the people. If the people had obeyed the Lord and trusted him for protection, they would never have needed a king to lead them and defend them. The people were never bothered with enemies as long as they were obed-

ient, but when they forsook Jehovah and worshiped and served idols, God allowed their enemies to bring them into bondage. Being thus involved and entangled in sin, the people could not see things as God did; they could not appreciate God's ways. Of such a people God said, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa. 55: 8, 9.) Some people today reject God's teaching because it does not sound reasonable, or does not meet their ideas of scientific possibility. They should remember that men are to walk by faith in God and not by their own reason or wisdom.

2. God often allows man to have his own way. God never forces man as an individual to obey him. And often he allows nations and communities of men to have their own way when it is contrary to his will. God allowed Adam and Eve to do as they pleased in the garden. He allowed the people of Noah's time to go so far astray that the world had to be destroyed. He allowed the people of Moses' time to have certain liberties with reference to divorce which were contrary to his will. (Matt. 19: 3-9.) God allowed the Jews to crucify Jesus, though he had plans to overrule the sinful deed to his own glory and to the salvation of mankind. So God allowed the Jews to have a king in the days of Samuel.

It was sinful for them to reject God as their king and place a man over them, and the king would bring in a long trail of accompanying evils which would not be for their good. But God in his wisdom could overrule this sinful deed of the people and use it for his own glory. And finally God used their king, David, to picture the Messiah, and called the throne on which the Messiah -was to sit the "throne of David." (Luke 1: 32.)

3. Man suffers for his folly. It is always folly for man to insist on having his way instead of submitting to God's way. And man always suffers for being self-willed and determined to have his own way. Adam and Eve had their own way, but suffered for it by being expelled from the garden. Noah's neighbors had their own way, but were lost in the flood. The Jews did as they wished when they crucified the Lord, but for that sin "wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." (1 Thess. 2: 16b.) We should learn this simple lesson: when people submit to God and make God's way their way and live therein, they are blessed of God with a happy fruitful life here and eternal life in the world to come; but when people become stubborn and determined to have their own way and walk therein, their way as a transgressor is hard in this life, and they must spend eternity far from the presence of God and from the glory of his power. (2 Thess. 1: 7-10.)

Introduction

The demand for a king in Israel was not altogether a new thing. Back in the days of Gideon, 150 years before the time of our lesson, the people tried to make Gideon their king. He had defeated the Midianite armies and had delivered Israel from their oppression. The people, wishing to show their appreciation and to fulfill a deep-seated desire to be like the nations around them, said to Gideon, "Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also." But Gideon was a faithful representative and servant of the Lord; he knew that God wished to be the sole ruler of his people, and he was not willing to set himself and his sons up in the place of God as rulers of the people. So he said, "I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: Jehovah

shall rule over you." (Judges 8: 22-24.) It must have taken a lot of humility and self denial and a lot of respect for the will of the Lord to enable Gideon to turn down this offer. We need men in the church today who love the Lord so much and are so determined to do his will that neither flattery nor bribery can turn their heads and who will not allow ambition for themselves or their sons to turn them from the right.

"It is difficult to realize the greatness of a historic figure after three thousand years, but Samuel must have been more than the Luther of his day. Uniting in himself all the highest offices of the nation—its supreme prophet, its virtual high priest, and its acknowledged ruler—his influence was intensified by the lofty

singleness of his life and aim. Men could not forget as his age increased how Jehovah had chosen to make revelations through him while he was yet a child; how he had grown up in the sacred shadow of the tabernacle; how he had been a Nazirite from his birth; how fearless and loyal had been his enthusiasm for Jehovah; how incorruptible he had been as a judge; and how well his life had illustrated the high morality and godliness he had enforced. They had seen the religious revolution he

had accomplished. The state as a whole in its great characteristics owed, in fact, its noble future to his work, for he had in effect founded the order of prophets; he had prepared the way for kings; and his revival of the Mosaic religion brought with it the future temple and its priesthood. Before his time Israel had had no real national existence, and seemed likely to perish entirely; yet he left it proud of its dignity as the people of God, and on the threshold of its highest glory under David. (Geikie.)

Exposition of the Text

I. Political Conditions in Israel (1

Sam. 8: 1-3)

When Samuel was old. It is difficult to know the age of Samuel at the time of our lesson, and scholars disagree as much as twelve to fifteen years. The chronology we follow gives the date of his birth as 1171 B.C., so at the time of our lesson he would be fifty-nine years of age. However, the Talmud (Jewish civil and canonical law, with commentary) gives his age as fifty-two at the time of our lesson. But another authority gives his age as seventy. (Pulpit Commentary.) The fact that he had sons old enough to be appointed as judges of a portion of the country, and the further fact that they had been in office long enough for all Israel to become dissatisfied with their conduct of affairs, would suggest that Samuel was well along in age.

His first-born was Joel. Samuel showed his piety in the naming of his sons. The word Joel means "Jehovah is God" or "whose God is Jehovah." The second son Samuel named Abijah. This word has two other forms in the Bible, Abia and Abiah. The word means "whose father is Jehovah."

They were judges in Beer-sheba. The word Beersheba means "well of swearing" or "well of the oath." Abraham and Abimelech made a covenant of friendship there and gave it its name. (Gen. 21: 22-32.) The name was reaffirmed when Abimelech and Isaac took the oath of friendship. (Gen. 26: 26-33.) Beer-sheba was the extreme southern limit of the possession of Israel; it was on the border of Philistine territory. The fact that Samuel could place judges there is significant. (1) This shows how completely Israel,

under the leadership of Samuel, had broken the bondage of the Philistines. (1 Sam. 7: 5-14.) And (2) this shows that when a man was called judge over Israel he did not rule a small portion, as claimed by some, but that he ruled the entire land.

His sons walked not in his ways. It is easy for men in public life to become so busy with the affairs of people in general that they neglect the discipline of their own children. Samuel could have taken warning from the experience of Eli in this matter. (1 Sam. 2: 22-26.) David made the same mistake, and one of his sons almost succeeded in taking the throne away from him. (2 Sam. 15 through 18.)

Turned aside after lucre. Three expressions are used to describe their sin, but it is possible that the love of money was the basis of all their trouble. Taking bribes and perverting justice were to satisfy their lust for money. Samuel was so free from the love of money (1 Sam. 12: 3, 4) and so busy looking after the welfare of others that he very likely reared his sons in near poverty. When they were old enough to be on their own, their sole desire was to become financially secure and independent. Their office as judge gave them their best opportunity to enrich themselves, so they took bribes of the wealthy and perverted justice; "thus the wicked rich had his cause, and the poor man was deprived of his right."

II. Israel's Solution of the Problem

(1 Sam. 8: 4-6)

Elders of Israel gathered themselves together. "Wherever a patriarchal system is in force the office of the elder will be found, as the

keystone of the social and political fabric; it is so at the present day among the Arabs, where the Sheik (the old man) is the highest authority in the tribe. That the title originally had reference to age is obvious; and age was naturally a concomitant of the office at all periods (Josh. 24: 31; I Kings 12: 6), even when the term had acquired its secondary sense. At what period the transition occurred, in other words, when the word *elder* acquired an official signification, it is impossible to say. The earliest notice of the *elders* acting in concert as a political body is at the time of the Exodus. . . . Their authority was undefined, and extended to all matters concerning the public weal; nor did the people question the validity of their acts, even when they disapproved of them (Josh. 9: 18)." (Smith's Bible Dictionary, Vol 1.) Changing the form of government of a nation of people was considered such serious business that the highest authority among the people was called into action. The body of elders spoke for the people. The meeting was in Ramah, Samuel's home. (1 Sam. 1: 1.) This place was situated about five or six miles north of Jerusalem on high ground, as the meaning of the word, *the height*, suggests.

Thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways. The elders of Israel had two reasons why they wished Samuel to make them a king; at least they voiced two reasons. It will be well to consider them in reverse order. First, his sons did not walk in his ways; they did not have his character, as stated in the section above. They were not the kind of men the people would follow; the people would not be satisfied to have them take the place of their father. Next, Samuel was old. And in this statement there are two things to consider. When Samuel was young and in his prime, he gave them a vigorous and efficient leadership, but his age now made that impossible. Next, if his sons held their place of authority until the death of their father, they might try to extend their rule over all the people. Such happened in the days of the judges and with regrettable results. (Judges 9: 1-6.) And since his age made such a possibility none too remote, they insisted that he take action immediately.

Make us a king to judge us like

all the nations. In this statement the elders of Israel uncover the real issue, the true reason for their request of Samuel. They wished to be like the nations around them. As long as they continued to live like the nations about them and worship the gods of the nations, they would need a king with a standing army to protect them. But if they had been pleased to live as God directed them, and if they had been satisfied to worship Jehovah and serve him only, they would never have felt the need of a king like the nations of Canaan. The desire to be like the people about us is thoroughly human. That desire led to a division in the church of the Lord nearly a century ago when some brethren introduced instrumental music and missionary societies with no better reason than that the people about us do so. And there is ground for prayerful vigilance among us today when churches are growing and building as never before, and when our missionary programs are taking on proportions never equalled before, and when power and influence are being centralized and exercised in institutions of learning and publication among us; for there is the possibility that those not so well grounded in the faith may follow the example of denominations about us into unscriptural forms of worship and service.

Samuel prayed unto Jehovah. We are told that the request of the elders of Israel displeased Samuel very much. But he is to be commended for taking the matter to the Lord in prayer instead of gathering as many men on his side as possible and defending his position with force. If the elders had prayed to God about their side of the matter, no mention is made of it. And since the thing they requested was obviously not the will of the Lord, it is very probable that they spent no time in prayer over it. From what follows, we gather the idea that Samuel simply prayed to know what was the will of Jehovah in the matter. He knew that the people's request was not in line with the Lord's will. So Samuel simply prayed to God to know what he would do with a request which was plainly opposed to the Lord's will.

III. Jehovah Agrees with Israel (1 Sam. 8: 7-10)

Hearken unto the voice of the people. We are not told whether Samuel was disappointed with the Lord's

answer. We do know that Samuel's prayer was for information, not for assistance to run things like he wished. We are not told why God agreed to let the people have a king at this time. We may be sure that this is not a political difficulty which the Lord did not foresee and for which he could not provide, for if that were true we could not believe in the omniscience and omnipotence of God. And we know that God did foresee and provide for just such a situation, for Moses, inspired of God, gave laws concerning the king which the people would demand. (Deut. 17: 14-20.)

They have not rejected thee. This is the only statement in the context which in any way reflects Samuel's attitude in the matter. From this statement we conclude that Samuel felt that the people had tired of his administration of affairs and that they were rejecting him as their ruler.

They have rejected me, Samuel was told that the people had rejected God. The form of government under which the people had lived was a theocracy, a form in which God was the ruler, through a human representative. The form of government for which they petitioned was a monarchy, one in which man was the supreme ruler. There are two forms, types, of monarchy: *absolute*, as Rome under the Caesars; *limited*, such as England has today. "They wanted no theocratic king, whose first duty would be to maintain the Mosaic law (Deut. 17: 18, 19), and protect the priest and prophet in the discharge of their legitimate functions; all they wanted was a soldier who would put an end to their state of anarchy, and

enable them to cultivate their fields without the danger of seeing the produce swept off by marauders." (Pulpit Commentary.)

According to all the works. In this verse we are told by the Lord that this action on the part of the people is not different from the way the people of Israel had acted ever since the Lord had delivered them from Egypt. This refusal to have him longer as their king is simply another piece in the same general pattern ever since they had been a nation.

Howbeit thou shalt protest solemnly unto them. Though God agreed to allow the people to have their king, he insisted that they be told beforehand many of the disadvantages of such a system of government. In verses 11 through 17 of this chapter we learn what Samuel told them about the king for which they were asking. He told them of high taxes, of conscription of both their son and their daughters, and appropriation of their property to the use of the king without reasonable compensation. Samuel told them there would come a time when they would cry unto Jehovah because of the oppression of their king, but that Jehovah would not answer them. In spite of all these solemn warnings the people still insisted on having their king like the nations around them. Samuel told them all to go home and leave the matter to him. The fact that they trusted him to give them what they wished, though it was in reality a rejection of him as God's representative, is a silent but powerful testimony to the unusual character of Samuel.

Relation to Our Aim

At this time the student should read again the aim of the lessons for this quarter and try to plant indelibly in his mind the outstanding facts, persons, and principles of this lesson.

1. Places to be remembered: Ramah and Beersheba. From a good Bible dictionary each one should learn the part each of these cities played in the life of the nation of Israel; he should know their location and whether they are in existence today.

2. Persons to be remembered: Samuel and his sons, Joel and Abijah. Samuel was one of the greatest characters ever produced in Israel, and the student would do well to use a

complete concordance and read every passage in the Bible where his name occurs.

3. Facts to be remembered: (a) Samuel judged all Israel, though he had to appoint his sons as assistants in the southern district, (b) Though Samuel's sons took bribes and perverted justice because of the love of money, the people did not censure Samuel for their misconduct. (c) Samuel was a public servant all his life, yet never was guilty of mistreating even the poorest person whom he served.

4. Lesson to be learned: (a) We should never forget to pray for God to guide us in matters where we are not sure what the will of the Lord is.

If Samuel had followed his own inclinations instead of asking what was the will of God, there might have been grave trouble in Israel where there was peace and harmony, (b) If every person in Israel could have shared Samuel's love and respect for God, what a great nation Israel would have been! But since they sinned in rejecting God as their king and finally went into captivity for continued sin, we have proof that sin is a reproach to a nation, (c) Israel lived beneath

her privileges. Israel could have had God for her king and could have enjoyed the provident care and protection of God constantly; but on account of rejecting God as their king and often going into idolatry, they were denied his care and protection. So we often live beneath our privileges; we deny ourselves many blessings because of our love of the things of this world, which make it impossible for God to bless us as he would do if we would love him solely and truly.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

How did Israel demonstrate the fact that their ways were not God's ways?

Why did the people have need of a king to lead and defend them?

What did Isaiah say of God's ways and man's ways?

What reasons do men often give today for not following God's ways?

Name and discuss some outstanding instances of God allowing man to go contrary to his will.

Discuss how God sometimes uses man's sinful actions for his own glory.

Is it a fact that men suffer for their sins? Give proof.

What simple lesson should we learn from this golden text?

Introduction

What Jewish leader was first offered the throne of Israel?

Under what circumstances was he offered the throne?

What was his reply to the people's proposition?

What characteristics did this man have which are needed in the church today?

What offices were united in Samuel?

To what extent do you think Israel was indebted to Samuel?

Political Conditions in Israel

What do you know of Samuel's age at the time of our lesson?

What is the Talmud?

What does it say of Samuel's age?

Give the name and meaning of each of Samuel's sons.

What characteristic of Samuel is seen in the names of these boys?

Where was Beersheba?

How did the place get its name?

What two things are suggested in the fact that Samuel placed his sons there as judges?

What is said of the way Samuel's sons lived?

What other good men are mentioned as having wicked sons?

What three sins are mentioned?

What was the basic trouble?

Is there a probable explanation of their lust for filthy lucre?

Israel's Solution of the Problem

When are the elders in Israel first mentioned?

Of what system of political government is the office of elder exist?

What is said of the authority of the elders in Israel?

Where did the elders meet Samuel?

Where was this place?

What two reasons did the elders give Samuel for asking a change of government?

Why was Samuel's age given as a reason for a change in government?

What was the real reason for their desire for a change in the form of government?

Was there actually a need for a king?

If the need existed, why?

Is there a danger that people in the church today may wish to become like the denominations about us?

What was Samuel's first reaction to their request for a king?

Is there any intimation that the elders had prayed about the matter?

Jehovah Agrees with Israel

What proof can you give that God had foreseen this action on the part of Israel?

What do *you* know of the laws Moses gave for a king?

What statement reflects Samuel's attitude?

What was his attitude?

Under what form of government had the people lived during Samuel's life?

For what form of government did Israel ask?

What would be the first duty of a theocratic king?

What did God say of this action of the people as compared to their usual way of life?

What did God have Samuel tell the people before they took the final step?

Relation to Our Aim

What places in this lesson are to be remembered?

What persons in this lesson should be remembered?

What three facts in this lesson should be remembered?

State and discuss as time permits three lessons to be learned.

Lesson II—April 10, 1955

SAUL ANOINTED KING

Lesson Text

1 Sam. 10: 17-27

17 And Sam'-u-el called the people together unto Je-ho'-vah to Miz'-pah;

18 And he said unto the children of Is'-ra-el, Thus saith Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el, I brought up Is'-ra-el out of E'-gypt, and I delivered you out of the hand of the E-gyp'tians, and out of the hand of all the kingdoms that oppressed you:

19 But ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saveth you out of all your calamities and your distresses; and ye have said unto him, *Nay*, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before Je-ho'-vah by your tribes, and by your thousands.

20 Sam'-u-el brought all the tribes of Is'-ra-el near, and the tribe of Ben'ja-min was taken.

21 And he brought the tribe of Ben'ja-min near by their families; and the family of the Mat'-rites was taken; and Saul the son of Kish was taken; but when they sought him, he could not be found.

22 Therefore they asked of Je-ho'-vah further, Is there yet a man to

come hither? And Je-ho'-vah answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the baggage.

23 And they ran and fetched him thence; and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward.

24 And Sam'-u-el said to all the people, See ye him whom Je-ho'-vah hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said. *Long live the king.*

25 Then Sam'-u-el told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before Je-ho'-vah. And Sam'-u-el sent all the people away, every man to his house.

26 And Saul also went to his house to Gib'-e-ah and there went with him the host, whose hearts God had touched.

27 But certain worthless fellows said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no present. But he held his peace.

Golden Text.—*“And all the people shouted, and said, Long live the king”* (1 Sam. 10: 24.)

Devotional Reading.—1 Sam. 9: 15-17.

Daily Bible Readings

- April 4. M. People Want to Be Like Others (1 Sam. 8: 19-22)
- April 5. T. Jehovah Rejected (1 Sam. 8: 1-9)
- April 6. W. Jehovah's Faithfulness (1 Sam. 12: 6-12)
- April 7. T. Saul Chosen King (1 Sam. 10: 17-27)
- April 8. F. Saul's Victory (1 Sam. 11: 1-11)
- April 9. S. Saul's Confirmation as King (1 Sam. 11: 12-15)
- April 10. S. Jehovah's Choice (Deut. 17: 14-20)

Time.—1095 B.C.

Places.—Mizpah and Gibeah.

Persons.—Samuel, Saul, and the people.

Golden Text Explained

1. Respect for rulers. The words of our text gave expression to the feelings of the people for their new, but long desired, king. They had got that which they requested, and all but demanded and they were happy about it. They had won a victory in their struggle for a form of government like the nations about them, and it was time to celebrate. This text has

been variously translated. The King James version has, "God save the king." This is the English form of the expression. There is no word in the Hebrew for the word long in our text; nor are there any words in the Hebrews for the words *God save* of the King James version. The Hebrew simply has *live the king*, or to put it in smoother form, *may the king*

live. But whatever form the expression takes, it indicates respect for the king, interest in his well-being, (a) It indicates that they wished for him good health of mind and body. Rulers have a heavy load of duties and responsibilities, which, if they take seriously, will require a sound mind and a healthy body. It is right that we be so concerned for our rulers today,

(b) It indicates that they were concerned for his personal safety. Rulers have enemies they would not have in private life, both among their own people and from foreign nations. We should feel concerned for the safety of those who guide the affairs of our nation. (c) It indicates that they wished for their king a long, full, and happy life. Rulers have many critics. Their mistakes are magnified; their successes are usually forgotten until after they are dead. One of the compensations for this is the knowledge that there are a multitude of good solid citizens who are well-wishers.

2. Pray for rulers. The words of our text are really a prayer for Saul. And we are taught to pray for our rulers. Paul taught Christians to pray for "kings and all that are in high place" (1 Tim. 2: 2), when the wicked Nero was on the throne. So we are to pray for rulers regardless of their personal character. Paul tells us that rulers are God's ministers for our good. (Rom. 13: 4.) We ought, therefore, to be interested in their welfare and should pray for them. And he teaches us that our prayers in their behalf will contribute to a "tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity" on our part.

3. Obey our rulers. Our text indicates that the people of Israel were

happy with their king, so we may conclude that they expected to obey him. We are taught to be in subjection to the higher powers, and he that resisteth the power withstandeth the ordinance (law) of God, and shall receive judgment, condemnation. (Rom. 13: 1, 2.) And it should be remembered that Paul wrote this to the Roman church while Nero was on the throne. Of course, obedience to God came first (Acts 5: 29), and no Christian is to sin that he may obey the law of the land; but we are obligated to obey the rulers regardless of how wicked they may be so long as they do not require us to sin.

4. Expect righteousness of our rulers. People have a right to expect, and demand, that their rulers be righteous, upright, and honorable, in their private and public life. (a) The ruler is not to take bribes. (Prov. 29: 4.) (b) He is not to listen to false counselors. (Prov. 29: 12.)

(c) He must faithfully judge the poor. (Prov. 29: 14.) (d) Rulers must abstain from strong drink. (Prov. 31: 4, 5.) (e) They should keep a copy of the law of God and read it all the days of their lives that they may learn to fear Jehovah and keep his statutes. (Deut. 17: 18-20.) These are a few things people have a right to expect of their rulers, first because these things are right. Next, people have a right to expect rulers to set good examples before their children. When rulers drink liquor at banquets, high school and college students think they may do so. When rulers of the land have no respect for God's laws concerning marriage and divorce, people generally will have the same attitude.

Introduction

When Samuel saw that the Lord was willing for the people to have a king, he sent them home and waited on the Lord to bring matters to pass in his own good time and way. Soon the Lord told Samuel a young man would call on him about other matters and that this man should be anointed as the first king. (1 Sam. 9: 15-17.) When Samuel intimated to Saul that he was the desire of all Israel, Saul was embarrassed, and replied that he was a humble person in the least family in the least tribe of Israel. (1 Sam. 9: 21.) Saul was the guest of Samuel and attended a feast in his honor and remained with him over night. When Saul was ready to de-

part in the morning, Samuel anointed him and gave him three signs by which he might be assured that these things happening to him were of the Lord. These were very simple signs, but such that one not inspired of God could not possibly know would happen to him. The first was that two men by Rachel's sepulchre would tell him the asses he had been hunting were found and that now his father was anxious about him. The second sign was that at the oak of Tabor he would meet three men going to Bethel, each carrying certain things, and they would give Saul two loaves of bread. The third sign was that at a certain place he would meet

a band of prophets who would be prophesying, that the Spirit of Jehovah would come upon Saul, and he would join the prophets in their prophesying, and be turned into another man. (1 Sam. 10: 2-6.) Verse 9 says, "God gave him another heart." Through the experiences Saul had that day he was matured for the work to which he was called. Whereas he had been interested only in his farm and stock and family, he was now interested in matters of state, the welfare of his people, and in plans for a peaceful, prosperous reign.

Exposition of the Text

I. Israel Gathers at Mizpah (1 Sam. 10: 17-19)

Samuel called the people together. Though the people's demand for a king was a virtual rejection of Samuel, he did not cease to be the spokesman for God; nor did he cease to enjoy the confidence of the people. Moreover, he had sufficient humility and love for the people to continue to work with and for them. He was not one to get angry and quit when things did not go to suit him. Many people in the church today would do well to follow Samuel's example in this respect.

Unto Jehovah at Mizpah. Several locations in Palestine wore the name of Mizpah. The names mean *the watch tower*. The city of our text was one of three where Samuel went regularly to teach and judge Israel. (1 Sam. 7: 15.) It was the place where he gathered Israel to pray to Jehovah about the oppression of the Philistines, and to encourage the people to throw off their yoke of bondage. (1 Sam. 7: 5-11.) It had become a sanctuary of Jehovah, in the same sense as Gilgal and Bethel, but at what time and in what manner no one seems to know. It was situated a few miles northwest of Jerusalem, near Ramah the home of Samuel.

Thus saith Jehovah. Samuel had a message from God for the people of Israel before their king was given them. He pointed out the fact that Jehovah had always done for them the very thing which they said they desired a king to do. They wished to be delivered from the oppression of the Philistines; Jehovah had delivered them from the bondage of Egypt. Other nations had from time to time oppressed them, and Samuel said Jehovah had delivered

When Saul reached home, his uncle questioned him in detail about his activities while he was away from home. Saul told him he had seen Samuel and learned from him that the asses had been found, but he did not say a word about Samuel anointing him as the first king in the kingdom all were expecting. Saul seemed to understand that he was to allow Samuel to work out the matters of the kingdom in his own way. And our lesson is concerned with the manner in which Samuel worked out these matters.

them out of the hands of these kingdoms. But Jehovah's deliverance was always on the condition that Israel repent of their sins, clean out their idols, and get right with God. The thing they wanted was a king who would deliver them without imposing such conditions on them.

Ye have this day rejected your God. The king which they demanded might deliver them from their national enemies, from the oppression of such nations as the Philistines, but the Ruler whom they were rejecting was one who could deliver them from all their *calamities* and *distresses*. Here it is implied that their king would be unable to deliver them from pestilences, famines, etc. The recent victory of Israel over the Philistines (chap. 7) and the victories recorded by Moses should have been enough to convince the most skeptical that the theocratic form of government under which they then lived was sufficient to their needs. But it was not proof or evidence that was needed; they needed the spirit of submission and complete surrender to the will of God. They had their hearts set on having a king like the nations about them, and no amount of proof could change their hearts.

II. Jehovah's Choice Made Known (1 Sam. 10: 20-24)

And the tribe of Benjamin was taken. The language used here shows that the king was determined by casting lots. They cast lots to see which tribe the king was in, and the lot fell upon Benjamin, which was one of the smallest of the twelve tribes. They must have felt honored that the king was to be one of their number. But years later they must have felt the sting of shame when the kingdom was taken from them and given to the

tribe of Judah. The tribe of Benjamin did not give up the throne without a long and hard fight, which cost the lives of good men on both sides. (2 Sam. 3: 1; 4: 1-12.)

The family of the Matrites was taken. This is the only occurrence of this word in the Bible, and it is difficult to know who the Matrites were. Some think that the word *Matri* is a corruption of the word *Bichri*, who was a descendant of Beecher, who was a son of Benjamin. (1 Chron. 6: 6-8; 2 Sam. 20: 1.)

Saul the son of Kish was taken. A lot was cast to see which of the households of the family of the Matrites was chosen, and the lot fell on Kish. Another lot must have been cast to see which in the household of Kish, and that lot fell on Saul. However, Kish seems to have had but the one son. (1 Chron. 8: 33; 9: 39.)

He hath hid himself among the baggage. Because Samuel had already anointed Saul, Saul knew what would be the outcome of the casting of lots. Being rather timid and unaccustomed to appearing in public, Saul hid himself. The *baggage* mentioned was that of the people who had come from a distance and consisted of the camping equipment and provisions. They had likely drawn up their vehicles in somewhat a military fashion in case of another attack from the Philistines as they had done the last time Samuel had asked them to come to Mizpah. (1 Sam. 7: 10.) This baggage afforded Saul a good place to hide himself from the public view. "For though a noble change had taken place in him (verse 9), yet no really worthy man was ever promoted to high office without having to overcome his own unwillingness, and no one probably ever worthily discharged solemn duties without having felt oppressed and humbled with the consciousness of his own unfitness to undertake them." (Pulpit Commentary.)

He was higher than any of the people. Saul was a noble physical specimen of manhood. "In the son of Kish, however, the various qualities demanded appeared to center. Of gigantic stature, in the prime of life, and noble alike in features and bearing, he realized the ideal of a king of men as conceived in antiquity. Men thought fondly of him after his death as the roe or gazelle of Israel, the emblem of swiftness and grace, of beauty and gentleness." (Geikie.)

Our text says he "was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward." In our modern way of expressing it we would say he stood head and shoulders above all other men.

See ye him whom Jehovah hath chosen. Was Saul the first and sole choice of Jehovah as the king of Israel? Or did Jehovah direct the lot to fall upon Saul because there were in him those qualities which the people demanded in a king to make them like the nations about them? If he was the Lord's choice, why did he fail so miserably that the kingdom had to be taken away from him and given to another? The writer inclines to the view that Jehovah gave the people the type of king they desired just like he gave them the type or form of government they demanded. God knew the people would not succeed in the operation of that of government, yet he allowed them to have it. So God knew that Saul would fail as king, yet he allowed the people to put him on the throne because he was the type of man they desired to lead them.

And all the people shouted. The people had observed the casting of lots, and they felt that the selection was fair, and that the outcome was directed by the Lord; they saw in Saul all that they desired in a king, and they were happy that they had won their victory. Their cry of *long live the king* was an expression of joy and satisfaction at the accomplishment of a task and the fulfillment of a long-cherished and deep-seated desire. They had the feeling of inferiority removed; they could truly say they were like the nations about them. Of course, the God who made them a nation and saved them from bondage and from all calamities and distresses was displeased, and their greatest human servant and friend, Samuel, was brokenhearted, but these things mattered little so long as they had what they desired. How human! May the Lord deliver us from such selfish disregard of the will of the Lord and the rights of others.

III. Saul's Reception by the People

(1 Sam. 10: 25-27)

Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom. Samuel had told the people on a previous occasion the manner of the kingdom. The reader will do well to read again what he said the king would do. (1 Sam. 8:

11-18.) Samuel was determined that they would not go into this form of government blinded to its disadvantages. The people could never say they had not been forewarned of the burdens and hardships of the monarchical form of government. Just one hundred twenty years later the people sent a committee to Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, asking him to relieve them of some of the very burdens Samuel pointed out would come. When Rehoboam refused to lighten their burdens, ten tribes broke away to form the northern kingdom. (1 Kings 12: 1-5.)

And wrote it in a book. An effort was made to keep the Jews from having that form of government known as an absolute monarchy. God maintained his prophets, who often put a check on the king and who, in some instances, were the invited and appreciated counselors of kings. Yet there were some kings who refused to listen to the prophets and ruled as absolute monarchs. Whether the manner of the kingdom which Samuel wrote in the book contained some limitations to the powers of the king as given by Moses (Deut. 17: 14-20) or whether there were certain agreements between the king and the elders of the people added we do not know. But since the writings of Moses were already laid up before Jehovah, there would be no point in writing the same thing again; hence, this which Samuel wrote must have been somewhat in the form of a constitution guaranteeing certain rights of the people as suggested by Moses. If this be true, their form of government was a limited monarchy.

Saul also went to his house to Gibeah. Saul did not immediately

form an elaborate system of government. He went back to his farm and continued to cultivate his crops. (1 Sam. 11: 5.) He waited for a situation to arise that called for his services. That situation came when the Ammonites tried to enslave the people of Jabesh-gilead. But Saul seems never to have formed an elaborate organization for the government of the people like David and others who followed.

There went with him the host. This word *host* means a *force* of men, and the idea of number is not to be emphasized. The quiet farm life Saul continued to live would not permit us to think of a great multitude of servants associated with him. The margin has "men of valor." It is said in our text that the Lord had touched their hearts. This means the Lord had caused them to feel a keen responsibility for the assistance and protection of the new king, and they placed themselves at his service.

How shall this man save us? This is the question asked by certain *worthless fellows* who despised Saul. Likely they were jealous of him. They showed their ugly disposition by refusing to bring Saul a present, or offering. Saul was now the king and servant of the people, so it became the duty of the people to support him. These worthless men refused to have any part in his support.

But he held his peace. The margin says "he was as though he had been deaf." On this occasion and in this matter Saul showed good judgment. He simply acted as if he did not hear what they said. Often that is a wise thing for us to do with reference to some things our enemies have to say about us.

Relation to Our Aim

1. Places to be remembered: Ramah, the home of Samuel; Gibeah, the home of Saul; Mizpah, the sanctuary where Samuel gathered the people to receive and acclaim their first king. Consult a Bible dictionary on these for further information.

2. Persons to remember: Samuel, Saul, Benjamin, Kish. Our lesson plan does not cover the life of Saul in detail, so it will be well for the student to read a good biography of Saul, or, with the use of a concordance, read every reference to him.

3. Facts to remember: (a) Samuel forewarned Israel of the evils of the

form of government they demanded.

(b) The Lord not only gave the people the form of government they desired, but he gave them the type of man they wanted for their first king.

(c) Saul showed a good attitude toward those who refused to accept him as king.

4. Lessons to learn: (a) Humanity is inclined to be selfish, even with God. Israel was willing to offend God in order to get what they wanted. The biggest obstacle in our way to being thoroughly Christian is self. (b) Position and power often ruin a humble and unselfish spirit. Saul is a

fine example of this, and the lesson is clear if we contrast his disposition when he was pulled out of the baggage to accept the kingdom with his disposition when he rebelled against God and refused to allow David to have the throne. (c) It is a sad commentary on humanity that in

nearly every group there are a few *worthless fellows* who allow jealousy to cause them to despise and refuse cooperation with those who are doing something worth while. Let us search our hearts that we may not be among the number of the *worthless fellows*.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

What do you know of the various forms of the principal statement of our text?

Name and discuss three points in proof that our text indicated their interest in the well-being of their king.

What is taught about praying for our rulers?

What does Paul teach us about obeying our rulers?

Name and discuss some acts of righteousness people have a right to expect of rulers.

Discuss the effect of the conduct of rulers on the young people of a nation.

Introduction

Tell of the events which led to the anointing of Saul.

What three signs did Samuel give Saul as evidence that these matters were of the Lord?

What is meant by giving Saul another heart?

Did Saul tell his family of the anointing? Why?

Israel Gathers at Mizpah

How did Samuel show a good attitude in the conduct of the affairs of the kingdom?

What is the meaning of the word Mizpah? What do you know of the location and history of Mizpah?

What service did Israel expect of a king which God had not and could not render?

On what condition did God render his service of deliverance?

What service could he render the people which a king could not give?

What proof did Samuel offer that the theocratic form of government was sufficient?

What did the people need more than they needed proof of God's ability to govern them?

Jehovah's Choice Made Known

By what method did the people determine God's choice of a king?

From what tribe did the king come and what do you know of that tribe?

From what family did the king come?

Who was Saul's father and what do you know of his family?

Where was Saul found when he was to be presented to the people?

What traits of character are brought to light by this incident?

What do you know of Saul's physical appearance?

What is meant by the statement that Saul was chosen by the Lord?

What did the shout of the people indicate?

What do you think of their selfish disregard for the Lord and Samuel?

Saul's Reception by the People

Of what did Samuel forewarn the people?

Can you relate an incident in the history of Israel which proves he was right?

What is the difference between an absolute and a limited monarchy?

Did Israel have either form to the exclusion of the other?

What do you think Samuel wrote in a book and laid up before Jehovah?

How did God often check the power of kings?

Where did Saul live?

What do you know of his activities immediately after his selection?

How did the majority of the people show their acceptance of Saul?

What was the attitude of a few worthless fellows?

What was Saul's attitude toward his enemies?

Relation to Our Aim

Discuss the places of special interest in the lesson.

What persons in this lesson deserve special attention?

Discuss three outstanding facts of this lesson.

State and discuss as time permits three lessons to be remembered.

Lesson III—April 17, 1955

SAMUEL WARNS SAUL

Lesson Text

1 Sam. 12: 1-5, 13-25

1 And Sam'-u-el said unto all Is'-ra-el, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you.

2 And now, behold, the king walketh before you; and I am old and grayheaded; and, behold, my sons are

with you: and I have walked before you from my youth unto this day.

3 Here I am: witness against me before Je-ho'-vah, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I op-

pressed? or of whose hand have I taken a ransom to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you.

4 And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand.

5 And he said unto them, Je-ho'-vah is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found aught in my hand. And they said, He is witness.

13 Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, and whom ye have asked for: and, behold, Je-ho'-vah hath set a king over you.

14 If ye will fear Je-ho'-vah, and serve him, and hearken unto his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of Je-ho'-vah, and both ye and also the king that reigneth over you be followers of Je-ho'-vah your God, well:

15 But if ye will not hearken unto the voice of Je-ho'-vah, but rebel against the commandment of Je-ho'-vah, then will the hand of Je-ho'-vah be against you, as it was against your fathers.

16 Now therefore stand still and see this great thing, which Je-ho'-vah will do before your eyes.

17 Is it not wheat harvest to-day? I will call unto Je-ho'-vah, that he may send thunder and rain: and ye shall know and see that your wicked-

ness is great, which ye have done in the sight of Je-ho'-vah, in asking you a king.

18 So Sam'-u-el called unto Je-ho'-vah; and Je-ho'-vah sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared Je-ho'-vah and Sam'-u-el.

19 And all the people said unto Sam'-u-el, Pray for thy servants unto Je-ho'-vah thy God, that we die not; for we have added unto all our sins *this* evil, to ask us a king.

20 And Sam'-u-el said unto the people, Fear not: ye have indeed done all this evil: yet turn not aside from following Je-ho'-vah, but serve Je-ho'-vah with all your heart:

21 And turn ye not aside; for *then would ye go* after vain things which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain.

22 For Je-ho'-vah will not forsake his people for his great name's sake, because it hath pleased Je-ho'-vah to make you a people unto himself.

23 Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against Je-ho'-vah in ceasing to pray for you: but I will instruct you in the good and the right way.

24 Only fear Je-ho'-vah, and serve him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things he hath done for you.

25 But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.

Golden Text.—"Only fear Jehovah, and serve him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things he hath done for you " (1 Sam. 12: 24.)
Devotional Reading.—1 Sam. 12: 6-12.

Daily Bible Readings

- April 11. M. Lessons from Past History (1 Sam. 12. 6-11)
- April 12. T. Faithfulness Rewarded (1 Sam. 12: 12-15)
- April 13. W. Evidence of God's Goodness (1 Sam. 12: 16-19)
- April 14. T. Samuel's Farewell Message (1 Sam. 12: 20-25)
- April 15. F. Sin of Rebellion (1 Sam. 15: 17-23)
- April 16. S. Folly of Saul (1 Sam. 13: 5-14)
- April 17. S. Goodness and Severity of God (Rom 11: 22)

Time.—1095 B.C.
Place.—Gilgal.
Persons.—Samuel, Saul, and the people.

Golden Text Explained

1. Fear Jehovah. The word *fear* has four distinct meanings. The most common meaning is, "Painful emotion marked by alarm; dread; disquiet." (Webster.) Dread, alarm, fright, panic, terror, and horror are given as synonyms. Certainly we are not to have such feeling in our hearts toward Jehovah as is described by

these words. Another meaning of *fear* is, "Awe: profound reverence, esp. for the Supreme Being." (Webster.) This is the meaning the word has in our text. The apostasy of the Jews is explained on the ground that "there is no fear of God before their eyes." (Rom. 3: 18.) Solomon says the fear of Jehovah is the beginning

(chief part) of knowledge. (Prov. 1: 7.) Again, "A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil; but the fool beareth himself insolently, and is confident." (Prov. 14: 16.) And David promises blessings to those who fear Jehovah. "The angel of Jehovah encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. . . . Oh fear Jehovah, ye his saints; for there is no want to them that fear him." (Psalm 34: 7, 9.) Fear, in the sense of fright, alarm, terror, is not compatible with love; perfect love casts out that kind of fear. (1 John 4: 18.) But fear, in the sense of awe and reverence, blends perfectly with love, trust, and worship. (Psalm 5: 7, 11; 22: 23; 115: 11.) This fear is essential in the Christian character and should be cultivated diligently.

2. Serve Jehovah. In our text fearing and serving Jehovah are closely connected. This is true in so many passages of scripture that we are forced to conclude that there is some inherent relationship between the fear and service of Jehovah. "Fear God, and keep his commandments." (Eccles. 12: 13.) "Fear Jehovah thy God; and him shalt thou serve." (Deut. 6: 13.) "Fear Jehovah your God, and observe to do all the words of this law." (Deut. 31: 12.) "He that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him." (Acts 10: 35.) The inherent connection is seen in this, "By the fear of Jehovah men depart from evil." (Prov. 16: 6b.) From this we learn that the fear of Jehovah causes men to cease to do evil and do right.

Our text tells us we are to serve God *in truth*. This means that we

are to offer God genuine, sincere, honest service. Our motives for the service are to be pure. And we are to serve him with *all our heart*. This reaches out to include our affections. We are to serve God because we love him, not because we are afraid we will go to hell if we do not.

3. Consider God's goodness. Samuel thought if the Jews would give proper consideration to the goodness of God in the past they would fear and serve him as they should. Their deliverance from Egyptian bondage; their home in Canaan; and their deliverance from the seven nations of Canaan were great national blessings for which they should thank God. Then there was the continual providential personal care for each one of them which they should never forget. And the remembrance of these things should move them to fear and serve Jehovah instead of going after the gods of the land.

Paul beseeches us "by the mercies of God" to give ourselves in continual service to God. (Rom. 12: 1.) He tells us that the goodness of God leads us to repentance when we stray from the path of right. (Rom. 2: 4.) If we would spend thirty minutes a day thinking of and counting our blessings, surely we could never refuse to fear and serve God faithfully. It is only when men put God out of their thoughts that they can quit serving him. So let us not forget to consider the many great things God has done for us, such as salvation from sin, a place in his holy family, hope of eternal life, as well as the daily providential care manifested in good health and daily bread.

Introduction

The selection of Saul at Mizpah by the casting of lots, as we learned in our last lesson, satisfied the people that they were going to have a king, but neither Saul nor the people seemed inclined to take immediate steps toward the organization of a government. Saul went back to the cultivation of his farm. It required a national emergency to cause Saul to accept active leadership of the people. The city of Jabesh in Gilead, the district east of the Jordan, was attacked by the Ammonites. Nahash, the leader of the Ammonites, would agree to a covenant with the people of Jabesh provided they allow him to put out the right eye of every man.

Jabesh asked for a period of seven days to see if they could find deliverance; word was sent to Saul for help; Saul called for volunteers with a threat of reprisal to all who did not respond; and three hundred thirty thousand men rallied to his call. Saul proved himself a leader of men and of an army on that occasion. He took the Ammonites by surprise and so completely turned them to riot that no "two of them were left together." This so completely established Saul in the hearts of the people as their leader that the people wished to round up his enemies (1 Sam. 10: 27) and execute them. But Saul magnanimously refused to allow their ex-

education on the ground that Jehovah had wrought deliverance in Israel that day; it was a day of deliverance, not of death. But whatever opposition Saul had was completely crushed that day, and he was the universally acknowledged leader of Israel. Taking advantage of this wave of popularity, Samuel proposed that all the people gather at Gilgal to "renew the kingdom." Saul had been anointed previously (1 Sam. 10: 1), but that was in private; there must necessarily be a public ceremony in which the people engaged. Josephus says Saul was anointed again on this occasion,

but the Bible does not say that he was. "The difference between the election of Saul at Mizpah and the confirmation of it at Gilgal is much the same as between the first proclamation of a king and his coronation. The latter is the nation's acknowledgment of his sovereignty, and the solemn consecration of him to his high office." (Pulpit Commentary.) The proceedings at Mizpah were not unanimously accepted; there was opposition voiced. But at Gilgal there was no opposition. Gilgal was chosen because it was a national sanctuary, and it was close to Jabesh-gilead.

Exposition of the Text

I. Samuel's Integrity Publicly Acknowledged. (1 Sam. 12: 1-5)

Behold, the king walketh before you. It was at this gathering in Gilgal when the kingdom was renewed that Samuel made this speech to Israel. He reminded them that he had yielded to their pressure and had placed a king over them, and he wished them to take notice of him while he reminded them of the service he had rendered.

Behold, my sons are with you. The implications of this statement are vague, and there is much difference of opinion as to the meaning. Certainly Samuel had removed them from office, as they were deputies under him. They were now private citizens and might be dealt with as the people saw fit.

I have walked before you. Samuel reminded the people that he had walked before them from the time he was a child. He not only had walked before them, but he had served the public all his life. He was placed in the tabernacles when he was old enough to be weaned from his mother. (1 Sam. 1: 24-27.) He lived ever afterwards under the gaze of the public and served the people in various ways.

Witness against me before Jehovah. Samuel exhibits unparalleled courage in his challenge to the people to point out one thing wherein he had done wrong. Surely if he had ever erred from the path of righteousness in dealing with his people, there would have been some one there that day who would have remembered it. There are four areas of his activity to which he calls attention. (1) *Whose ox have I taken?* By this and the next statement Samuel af-

firms that he had not received pay for his services. Being the servant of the people, he had a right to expect remuneration, support; but not even an ox or an ass had been given him by the people. (2) *Whom have I defrauded?* Not only had he not accepted honest remuneration, but he had not used his office to take money by fraud from the people. There are so many ways in which people in office can take money by fraud because of the peculiar relationship they have with the public; some of those ways are even "within the law" to the extent that they cannot be prosecuted, yet they sin in doing so, and the people whom they defraud resent the unjust treatment. If Samuel had been guilty of such conduct, surely some one in that vast throng would have known it and had the courage to answer his challenge. (3) *Whom have I oppressed?* To oppress means, "To crush, burden, or trample down by abuse of power or authority." Samuel had authority over the people, but he challenged them to point to one time when he had used that authority to their hurt or to his personal pleasure or profit. Few public servants can serve even a short time and make such a challenge, but Samuel had given his whole life in service to the public and still made the challenge. (4) *Of whose hand have I taken a ransom?* This ransom means money given to buy off a guilty person. Samuel had not accepted money from guilty people who wished to keep from suffering the penalty of the law. He speaks of this ransom as something being paid to blind his eyes, or to induce him to hide his eyes from the sin of the guilty one.

Thou hast not defrauded us. When Samuel made the challenge, the peo-

pie responded with an acknowledgment of his integrity. No one had any charge to bring against him. And when Samuel called both Jehovah and Saul as witnesses of their acknowledgment, the people still responded in his favor saying, "He is witness."

II. Warning Against Disobedience (1 Sam. 12: 13-18)

If ye will fear Jehovah, and serve him. Samuel made a sincere and determined effort to impress upon the minds of the people that, though they had a king, they were still obligated to fear Jehovah. He wished them to realize that the king was not taking the place of the Lord in the life of their nation. The success and survival of their kingdom depended upon their attitude toward Jehovah.

Both ye and also the king that reigneth over you. The king was to be no exception to the rule—he must fear and respect Jehovah just the same as the humblest citizen in the kingdom. Disrespect on the part of the king would set an example for the people to follow, so the king was bound for his own sake and for the sake of his people to respect and obey Jehovah. If the rulers of nations today would honor the moral laws of God, this would be a much better world in which to live.

If ye will not hearken. Samuel made sure the people knew both sides of the story. If they would respect and obey Jehovah, he would bless them; but if they refused to obey the voice of Jehovah and lived in rebellion against him, the hand of Jehovah would be against them. That is the principle upon which God has always dealt with his people. No one lesson is emphasized more in both Testaments than is this one. Adam and Eve had the same proposition in Eden. The people in Noah's day were offered the same choice. In each instance people chose to disobey God, and they suffered the penalty. If every disobedience received its just recompense of reward, how do we think we can escape the punishment of God for our disobedience and rebellion? (Heb. 2: 1-3.) The unchangeableness of God in his moral character is sufficient evidence that there is no escape from punishment for those who reject and rebel against God.

I will call unto Jehovah, that he may send thunder and rain. Samuel

reminded the people that it was the time of the wheat harvest, which meant it was the dry season of the year. There was no probability of a rain or thunderstorm. Men who have spent many years in Palestine say they have never seen rain there in June and July. So to give the people a sign from heaven to impress them with the fact that they were dealing with Jehovah, Samuel said he would call for thunder and rain. To have called for such in the stormy season of the year would have been little proof; but to call for it in a time of the year when it most rarely occurs, and to have his call respected by Jehovah, was decisive that God was with Samuel and sanctioning everything he said.

Ye shall know and see that your wickedness is great. Not only was this rain and thunderstorm proof that God was with Samuel, but it was proof of what he had told them about their sin in rejecting God as their king and demanding a king like the nations round about them.

The people greatly feared Jehovah. The Lord respected Samuel's prayer and sent rain and thunder upon the people. The sign from heaven had its desired effect in the fear for Jehovah which it produced in their hearts. However, like many people today, their fear of Jehovah was all too shallow; it did not last very long. The history of Israel from Sinai to the cross of Christ is full of examples of a recognition of their sins, of a promise to do better, and of an immediate apostasy. God's loving care of such a people is a great comfort to us in our weakness and in our faltering efforts to love and serve him.

III. Final Words of Warning and Comfort (1 Sam. 12: 19-25)

Pray for thy servants unto Jehovah. This statement of the people shows to what extent Samuel had succeeded in convicting Israel of sin. They desired his prayers in their behalf that they might not die for their sin. And Samuel succeeded in making them realize that their demand for a king amounted to a rejection of God, for they said, "We have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king." But, like Balaam of old, they were not so deeply convicted of sin that they were willing to turn back in abhorrence of their sin. It is easy for us to realize

that we have sinned and to wish we had never done the wrong, and yet, on account of being so deeply involved in the matter, refuse to quit it.

Fear not, . . . yet turn not aside. In Samuel's reply to the people, we have both comfort and warning. They feared they might die for their sin, but Samuel assured them that God would not destroy them, though they richly deserved that destruction. But he warned them against continuing in open rebellion against God. If Saul had taken this warning to heart, he would have preserved his kingdom and saved himself and family a lot of sorrow and suffering.

Then would ye go after vain things. Turning aside from following Jehovah would amount to following vain things which cannot profit nor deliver. This is obviously a reference to idolatry. Idols are often referred to as vain things. The reader should study Isa. 44: 6-20 in this connection. "They that fashion a graven image are all of them vanity; and the things that they delight in shall not profit." Paul said, "We know that no idol is anything in the world, and that there is no God but one." (1 Cor. 8: 4b.) The first and second commandments of the Decalogue covered this ground, but the Jews did not learn the lesson well until they were carried away into captivity. Their experiences in captivity cured them of their idolatry.

Jehovah will not forsake his people. This is only a part of the truth; standing by itself, it is not the truth, for God has and will forsake his people. The truth stated here is that Jehovah will not forsake his people for his name's sake. Samuel said that God would not forsake Israel at this time for this sin, though the sin was of such magnitude that he would be justified in so doing. But for the sake of his own name Jehovah would not at this time forsake

his people. But the idea that God will not for any reason, under any circumstance, forsake his people is false. "Jehovah said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and play the harlot after the strange gods of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them. Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, . . . so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?" (Deut. 31: 16, 17.) Read also 2 Chron. 15: 1, 2; Jer. 23: 33-40; 2 Chron. 24: 20. The reason Samuel gave for God not forsaking Israel for their rejection of him was, "Because it hath pleased Jehovah to make you a people unto himself." God made them a nation of people for the purpose of bringing salvation to the world. (John 4: 22c.) But since that service has been performed, "wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" (1 Thess. 2: 16b), and there is no longer any privileged race or nation (Gal. 3: 28).

Moreover as for me. Samuel recognized his place in the nation. He realized that he could no longer be their ruler, but there was a place for him to serve. His humility is commendable. Some will not serve li they cannot rule; they should take a lesson from Samuel. (1) Samuel said he would not cease to pray for the people. This implies that he had already been praying for them. Fortunate is the person who has such a man as Samuel praying in his behalf. (2) Samuel would continue to teach them the good and the right way; he would show them the "old paths." But like their children in years to come, they did not care to walk therein. (Jer. 6: 16.)

Relation to Our Aim

1. Places to remember. Gilgal is the place where the Israelites camped when they entered Canaan. It was there they erected the memorial made of twelve stones taken from Jordan. (Josh. 4: 20) and it was there the covenant of circumcision was renewed (Josh. 5: 2-9). Jabesh-gilead was saved by Saul (see introduction), and showed their appreciation when Saul was slain. (1 Sam. 31: 11-13.)

2. Facts to remember. (a) The renewal of the kingdom at Gilgal when all the people enthusiastically accepted Saul as their king. (b) Samuel's challenge to the people to find any fault in his life and administration of their affairs while he was judge, (c) The rain and thunderstorm during harvest as a sign from heaven evidencing God's presence

with Samuel and his interest in the affairs of the kingdom.

3. Lessons to learn, (a) Holy living and righteous treatment of others give a man courage and confidence, and make even the thought of compromise unnecessary. Samuel could rebuke Israel for sin without even the fear of some one retaliating with an accusation of wrongdoing in his life to soften the blow, (b) Israel was told that they sinned in rejecting God as their king and asking a man instead; they were given a sign from heaven in confirmation thereof;

and they realized their sin exposed them to the death penalty, yet when they learned that the penalty would not be exacted, they did not turn from their sin. People continue in their sins because the penalty is not speedily executed. (Eccles. 8: 11.)

(c) Samuel was humble enough to take a demotion from ruler to teacher, but in reality it was a promotion. He was relieved of temporal duties to give all his time to the spiritual interests of Israel. Teachers of youth can determine the destiny of a nation.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

What is meant by fearing Jehovah?

What is given as the reason for the apostasy of the Jews?

Contrast the wise man and the fool with reference to fear of Jehovah.

What are some of the blessings promised to them who fear Jehovah?

How are fear and service connected in scripture?

What is meant by serving God in truth? with all the heart?

What did Samuel use as a motive to cause Israel to serve Jehovah?

What does Paul use to move us to serve God?

Introduction

What evidence do we have that Saul did not organize a government, immediately after his selection?

What national emergency caused Saul to become an active leader of the people?

Who was the leader of this attacking nation?

What painful humiliating condition of surrender did he impose on Jabesh-gilead?

What request did they make of Nahash?

How did Saul gather an army and how many responded?

How complete was Saul's victory over Nahash?

How did Saul show a magnanimous spirit on the day of victory?

Why did Samuel ask the people to go to Gilgal?

Contrast the events at Mizpah with those at Gilgal as related to Saul.

Samuel's Integrity Publicly Acknowledged

What did Samuel mean by telling the people his sons were with them?

When did Samuel begin living before the people?

How did Samuel exhibit unparalleled courage on this occasion?

Name and discuss the four areas of activity to which Samuel challenged the criticism of the people.

How does Samuel rank with the average public servant of today?

How did the people respond to this challenge?

Warning Against Disobedience

What did Samuel strive to impress upon the minds of the people?

Did Samuel have the courage to include Saul in his warning?

What effect does the example of rulers have on the people?

What principle based on the nature of God did Samuel teach the people?

What sign from heaven was given and what was its implication?

How did the people respond to this sign from heaven?

What lesson does Israel's history teach us with reference to these matters?

Final Words of Warning and Comfort

To what extent did Samuel succeed in convicting Israel of sin?

May we become so involved in sin as to be sorry, yet refuse to quit the sin?

What did Israel fear would be the consequence of their sin?

What was implied by turning away from Jehovah to vain things?

What does Isaiah say about idols? what does Paul say?

What is taught in the Decalogue about idols?

Is it possible for God's people to so sin that God will forsake them?

Why did not Jehovah forsake his people at this time?

Are the Jews God's people today?

What two things did Samuel promise to do for the people?

Relation to Our Aim

What do you know of the history of Gilgal?

What did Jabesh-gilead do to show appreciation for Saul?

Name and discuss as time permits three facts of this lesson.

What effect do holy living and righteous treatment of others have on a man?

What encourages people to continue in the practice of their sins?

Was Samuel demoted or promoted?

Lesson IV—April 24, 1955

JEHOVAH REJECTS SAUL AS KING

Lesson Text

1 Sam. 15: 13-23

13 And Sam'-u-el came to Saul; and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of Je-ho'-vah: I have performed the commandment of Je-ho'-vah.

14 And Sam'-u-el said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?

15 And Saul said, They have brought them from the Am'-a-lek-ites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto Je-ho'-vah thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.

16 Then Sam'-u-el said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what Je-ho'-vah hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on.

17 And Sam'-u-el said, Though thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Is'-ra-el? And Je-ho'-vah anointed thee king over Is'-ra-el;

18 And Je-ho'-vah sent thee on a journey, and said, Go, and utterly destroy the sinners the Am'-a-lek-ites, and fight against them until they be consumed.

19 Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of Je-ho'-vah, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst that which was evil in the sight of Je-ho'-vah?

20 And Saul said unto Sam'-u-el, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of Je-ho'-vah, and have gone the way which Je-ho'-vah sent me, and have brought A'-gag the king of Am'-alek, and have utterly destroyed the Am'-a-lek-ites.

21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the devoted things, to sacrifice unto Je-ho'-vah thy God in Gil'-gal.

22 And Sam'-u-el said, Hath Je-ho'-vah as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Je-ho'-vah? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry and ter'-a-phem. Because thou hast rejected the word of Je-ho'-vah, he hath also rejected thee from being king.

Golden Text.—"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15: 22.)

Devotional Reading.—1 Sam. 15: 1-9.

Daily Bible Readings

- April 18. M.....Saul Chosen as King (1 Sam. 10: 17-25)
- April 19. T..... Kingdom Renewed at Gilgal (1 Sam. 11: 12-15)
- April 20. W..... Saul Acts Foolishly (1 Sam. 13: 5-13)
- April 21. T..... Kingdom to Be Taken from Saul (1 Sam. 13: 14, 15)
- April 22. F..... Saul's Disobedience (1 Sam. 15: 10-16)
- April 23. S..... Saul's Rejection (1 Sam. 16: 17-28)
- April 24. S..... Kingdom Given to Another (1 Sam. 15: 27-31)

Time.—1079 B.C.

Place.— Gilgal.

Persons.— Samuel and Saul.

Golden Text Explained

1. What is obedience? The word obedience is defined as the act or fact of obeying, hence we must define the word obey. Webster says it means, "To execute the commands of." The servant cannot obey without a command from the master; the citizen cannot obey without a law from the ruler, or government; the creature cannot obey without a law or commandment, from the Creator. "Where

there is no law, neither is their transgression." (Rom. 4: 15b.) Obedience to God is simply executing the commands of God. Disobedience is either failing to execute the commands of God or doing something which God has not commanded. One cannot obey God in doing something God has not commanded. The Jews washed their hands as an act of worship. Jesus called it vain wor-

ship because God had not commanded them to do it. (Matt. 15: 1-9.) From this we establish the principle that acceptable worship consists of executing the commands of God, while vain worship consists of doing something God has not commanded. Every act of true worship must be an act of obedience. Abel's worship was an act of obedience to God. He offered by faith (Heb. 11: 4); faith comes by hearing God's word (Rom. 10: 17); therefore true worship consists of doing that which God has commanded in his word.

2. The use of sacrifice in our text. A sacrifice is an offering of animal or vegetable life with a view to honoring God. God had commanded that certain sacrifices be offered. So when people sacrificed, they obeyed God. If sacrifice is obedience, how could obedience be better than sacrifice? A thing cannot be better than itself. So, in this statement of our text, we must view sacrifice as divorced from obedience. Saul's sacrifice was one which he planned God's command to destroy the Amalekites. God would not be pleased to offer at the expense of disobeying with a sacrifice which was made possible only through disobedience to a positive commandment. One might give a thousand dollars to feed the hungry or preach the gospel, but if he had to steal the money before he could give it, his gift would not please God.

3. Obedience is better than sacrifice. As explained above, this is sacrificed detached from obedience. As such it is worthless, (a) Because God is not in need of that which is

offered to him; in reality everything belongs to him already. (Psalm 50: 9-13.) (b) Because such an offering to God, detached from obedience, is man's own substitution for what God commanded, it would tend to satisfy his own conscience and confirm him in his disobedience, (c) Obedience is general and grounded upon the essential relationship between God and man. Sacrifice is specific and is not grounded upon an essential and eternal relationship between man and God. By sacrifice here we mean the offering of animal or vegetable life. Man has always been obligated to obey God and will always, throughout eternity, be obligated to obey him. But we are not now obligated to offer animal or vegetable life in sacrifice to God, nor will we be so obligated in eternity. So obedience is better, more important and essential, than sacrifice. Saul made the mistake of valuing that which is formal and temporal more highly than he valued that which is spiritual and eternal. The religious world is making that mistake today. Forms and ceremonies of a temporal and carnal nature fill their programs of worship. Good taste and conformity to modern standards are attained and maintained, if necessary, at the expense of character in their personnel and of obedience to simple laws regulating worship. There are tendencies in churches of Christ to go in the same direction, and the purity of the church can be maintained only by faithful teaching of the truth, exposure of that which is false, and eternal, prayerful, studious vigilance on the part of all.

Introduction

As a connecting link between this lesson and the one of last week, the reader should study 1 Sam. 13: 1-15. In this passage we have the record of another mistake Saul made in connection with a sacrifice. The Philistines were gathering for an attack on Israel. Samuel had instructed Saul to wait in Gilgal seven days when Samuel would appear to offer sacrifices. Men were deserting the army to hide from the Philistines. Saul was restless, fearing his army would leave him, and fearing that Samuel would not keep his appointment. When the seventh day came, Samuel had not made his appearance. This was a test of Saul's faith and his submission to the will of God, as is

clearly stated in verses 13 and 14. Saul failed to stand the test. He took upon himself the responsibility of offering the sacrifice; he usurped the place of priest. He would combine in himself the offices of priest and king. This, in the face of Samuel's instruction, was an act of presumption. His sin was not so much the act of offering a sacrifice, but disobedience to God's word spoken through Samuel. He accused Samuel of not coming within the appointed time, but since Samuel arrived before the end of the seventh day, Saul's accusation was untrue and unfair.

Another interesting event is the battle at Michmash. Saul's army had dwindled to about six hundred men.

and they were unarmed; only Saul and Jonathan had swords. Jonathan secretly went out to an advance garrison of the enemy and slew some twenty men with the help of his servant. The news of slaughter traveled, and was exaggerated as it traveled, until the whole army of the Philistines took to flight. The record says the earth quaked, so we may conclude that God worked for the Israelites to turn the army of the enemy to flight. Saul rashly placed a curse upon any one who would eat before the job of destruction was finished. Jonathan, not knowing of the curse, found and ate

some honey. When Saul asked counsel of God through the priest, God did not answer. Taking this as a sign of sin among the people, lots were cast to learn who was the guilty party. The lot fell on Jonathan, and Saul would have slain his own son, but the army intervened by force to save him. This and his ill-advised sacrifice both provide evidence of Saul's unfitness for being a king. He was lacking in faith in God's word and submission to his will; he was so worldly minded that he had little or no place for God in his thoughts and plans. It is easy for us to make this mistake.

Exposition of the Text

I. Evidence of Saul's Sin (1 Sam. 15: 13-16)

And Samuel came to Saul. Jehovah had made an appearance to Samuel to acquaint him with the action of Saul and the army. Samuel already knew of Saul's failure to follow the commandment of the Lord, and that said failure was so serious that God would reject him as king. On account of this information from Jehovah, Samuel had "cried unto Jehovah all night." (1 Sam. 15: 10-12.)

Blessed be thou of Jehovah. Saul recognized Samuel as the representative of Jehovah. When he was commissioned to destroy the Amalekites, the command came from God through Samuel. (1 Sam. 15: 1-3.) And in this greeting there seems to be no trace of any feelings of guilt, any consciousness of sin.

I have performed the commandment of Jehovah. In this we have further evidence that Saul thought he had done what he was commanded to do. Saul belonged to that class of people who think they are too big and too busy to be bothered with details. He got the idea from what Samuel said that he was to conduct a successful military campaign against the Amalekites, and he knew he had done so. The matter of bringing the king and a few sheep and cattle seemed a rather trivial thing to him.

What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep? This was Samuel's evidence of Saul's sin. The command of the Lord was total destruction. The bleating of sheep and the lowing of oxen proved to Samuel that Saul had not done what Jehovah com-

manded. Many times our sins "catch up with us," "find us out," and the evidence is so obvious and tangible that evasion and denial can only aggravate our guilt.

The people spared the best. It is difficult to determine whether Saul was trying to lay the blame on others or was simply telling what actually happened. The natural conclusion is that the people did wish to make a big display in Gilgal, and that the idea appealed to Saul's vanity. Being the king, it was Saul's duty to tell the people the will of the Lord in the matter and to insist that they submit to it. Saul's failure was that he either did not pay enough attention to what Samuel told him or that he did not care to be bothered about the details of the instructions. It was his duty to know the will of the Lord in this matter and to lead the people into doing the will of the Lord. In this he had utterly failed, and Samuel came to tell him so

II. Saul Charged with Sin (1 Sam. 15: 17-19)

Though thou wast little. Samuel reminded Saul of his humility and backwardness at the time he was pulled out of the baggage of the army to be presented before the people as their king. (1 Sam. 10: 22, 23.) There is an implication in this statement that Saul had made a change, that he was no more that humble man willing to follow the commandments of the Lord. He had become so big and important in his own sight that he no longer felt it necessary to comply with every detail of the Lord's instructions.

Wherefore then didst thou not obey? Here is the formal charge of

disobedience. Though Saul had defeated the Amalekites against whom he was sent, he is accused of disobeying the commandment of the Lord because the king had been saved and a few cattle and sheep. (David later crushed the Amalekites in the vicinity of Ziklag, (1 Sam. 30: 13-18.) Saul planned to kill the sheep and oxen, and may have intended to execute Agag, king of the Amalekites, when he put on the big show in Gilgal. But this was not in harmony with what he had been told to do. When he insisted on doing things in his own way instead of following the instructions of the Lord, he sinned. People today need to learn that they have no right to change any of the details of the Lord's commandments. God is the lawgiver; a man is to do nothing but obey the law. When man starts to changing parts of the law around to suit his fancy and convenience, he gets out of his place as a creature and arrogates to himself the wisdom and authority of the Creator. This is high-handed rebellion and is not tolerated by the Lord in any man regardless of his birth, wealth, or position.

But didst fly upon the spoil. Human nature has a weakness for wealth in all its forms. Nations have been plundered for no other reason than for the wealth of spoil which the plunderers could take therefrom. Except in rare instances the Israelites were not allowed to take the spoil of the enemy for their personal use lest they should cultivate the lust for spoil and become a nation of plunderers. Achan died for violating this law at Jericho. (Judges 6, 7.) If a city of Israel turned to idolatry, it was to be destroyed, but the spoil was to be burned. (Deut. 13: 12-18.) Whether this law applied to the spoil of the Amalekites is not certain. Even if it did apply, Saul would not likely be acquainted with it. However, Samuel's instruction to Saul with reference to the destruction of the Amalekites was clear and specific, so that Saul had no excuse for taking the spoil or allowing the people to do so.

m. Saul Answers the Charge (1 Sam. 15: 20, 21)

Yea, I have obeyed the voice of Jehovah. Saul still contends that he has done what he was commanded to do. Either he paid no attention to the details of the instructions con-

cerning the destruction of the Amalekites, or he did not consider them of sufficient importance to bother with them, or he did not feel that part of the Amalekites and a few sheep and oxen were of sufficient importance to constitute disobedience to the command of the Lord. He had done so nearly everything the Lord said for him to do that he felt free to insist that he had obeyed the Lord. Many people today think that, if they do a majority of the things the Lord commands his people to do, surely the Lord will not punish them for leaving a few things undone. Remember king Saul!

And have brought back Agag the king of Amalek. Saul does not accuse the people of sparing Agag; he accepts responsibility for that himself. And from the form of the statement here, we conclude that he was right proud of the fact that he had brought him back as proof of his great victory over the Amalekites. He just did not have the proper conception of what constituted obedience to Jehovah. He seemed not to be aware of the fact that the presence of Agag was concrete evidence of his disobedience.

Have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. This command to destroy a whole nation of people, even infants, has posed a difficulty for many people. But the history of the world provides many instances of nations becoming so wicked that their extermination is necessary to serve the best interests of all humanity. Often an individual must be put to death because he is no longer fit to live in society. The destruction of the Amalekites was predicted when they made war on Israel in Rephidim. (Ex. 17: 8-16.)

To sacrifice unto Jehovah thy God in Gilgal. Saul thought the purpose for which the people brought back the sheep and oxen would excuse them for violating the command of God. He knew that the offering of sheep and oxen in sacrifice was pleasing to God. But Saul seemed not to understand when and why sacrifices are pleasing to Jehovah. He thought the sacrifice itself, either the animal or the act of devoting it to God, was what the Lord desired. He did not understand that a sacrifice was pleasing to God only when it came as an expression of love, reverence, and submission of a contrite and obedient heart. Though the people had

good intentions, their act of disobedience was severely condemned. People today who think that good intentions make most anything acceptable to the Lord should learn a lesson from Saul's experience here.

IV. Saul Sentenced for Sin (1 Sam. 15: 22, 23)

Hath Jehovah as great delight? A question is put for the purpose of affirming a truth. The thing Samuel wished to teach Saul was that Jehovah has greater delight in obedience from the heart than he has in sacrifices detached from obedience. The offering of dead animals can neither benefit God nor give him pleasure. The offering of animals in sacrifice had at least two purposes, (a) It was a test of man's faith and submission to the will of God. If the offerer did any thinking at all, he knew that dead animals could not possibly benefit or please the Lord. Knowing that, the worldly wise would refuse to do it on the ground that it was unnecessary and unreasonable. The God-fearing man would offer the sacrifice and look to God for the blessing, (b) Such sacrifices taught man the defiling and destructive effects of sin and his need of a substitute to suffer for his sins. The sacrifice Saul planned in Gilgal would have neither of these characteristics, so God would have no pleasure in it.

Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft. This is considered a difficult verse to translate, so there is considerable variety in translations and commentaries. But the most obvious meaning suggested by our text is that Samuel desired to impress upon Saul the Lord's estimate of the sinfulness of

rebellion. Saul thought lightly of disregarding the will of the Lord, especially if it seemed to him a matter of little consequence. While on the other hand, Saul thought witchcraft was a horrible sin, and he made a determined effort to destroy it. (1 Sam. 28: 9.) So Samuel said that rebellion is as sinful in God's sight as witchcraft. Since Saul could appreciate the sinfulness of witchcraft, Samuel used it to impress him with God's estimate of rebellion.

Stubbornness is as idolatry and teraphim. Saul was not only rebellious, he was stubborn in that rebellion. The word rebellion means opposition to one in authority, insubordination. To be stubborn is to be obstinate, unyielding, persistent, difficult to manage. Synonyms are "mulish, pigheaded." And Samuel said stubbornness is as sinful in God's sight as idolatry and teraphim. This word teraphim refers to the household gods which some worshiped, while others kept them because they were supposed to bring good luck.

Because thou hast rejected the word of Jehovah. Here we learn the sentence which Samuel pronounced upon Saul. Jehovah rejected Saul from being king over Israel on account of his sin. Saul had been warned before of the loss of his kingdom on account of his sin connected with another sacrifice. (1 Sam. 13: 13, 14.) The fact that Saul was rejected because he rejected the word of God should suggest to us the importance of the word of the Lord in our salvation. Jesus often taught that men must respect the word of God. (Matt. 7: 21-27; John 12: 48-50.)

Relation to Our Aim

1. People to remember The student should consult a good Bible dictionary for information on the Amalekites. They were a nomadic tribe living in the peninsula of Sinai and the wilderness along the border between Palestine and Egypt. Their origin is difficult to determine, but we read of them in the time of Abraham. (Gen. 14: 7.) They should be remembered as the people who became unfit for human society and were destroyed.

2. Facts to remember, (a) A prediction which Moses wrote in a book (Ex. 17: 14) was fulfilled several hundred years later by Saul, (b) Saul allowed his position and au-

thority to change him from a humble, submissive man into a stubborn rebel who refused to allow God to rule him. (c) Samuel brought messages of stern condemnation from God to the people with the same faithfulness and promptness that he brought messages of hope and cheer

3. Lessons to remember, (a) Obedience to God's commandments is worth more to a soul than all the pomp and ceremony the imagination of man can devise, (b) Sin brought suffering and death not only to the wicked Amalekites, but to Saul the king of Israel. God is no respecter of persons, (c) Men are often wrong in their estimate of sin. Saul re-

garded witchcraft as being exceeding sinful, but did not view stubbornness as being very bad. Some preachers, elders, deacons, and others who have

the "rule-or-rum" spirit, might profit from this lesson. God's estimate of stubbornness should cause many to examine themselves more closely.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

Can you give a general definition of the word obedience?

Of what does acceptable worship consist?

What is the connection between obedience and faith?

What is the meaning of sacrifice as used in our text?

Why is sacrifice detached from obedience worthless?

Can you contrast obedience and sacrifice as used in our text?

What mistake did Saul make as to the relative value of obedience and sacrifice?

Do you know of tendencies in churches of Christ to value form and ceremony too highly?

Introduction

Can you tell the story of Saul's mistake in connection with another sacrifice which occurred sometime before the events of our lesson?

Can you tell the story of the battle at Michmash?

What weaknesses in Saul were emphasized in these events?

Evidence of Saul's Sin

Where did Samuel get his first information of Saul's sin?

How did this information affect Samuel?

Tell of the meeting of Samuel and Saul at Gilgal.

What concrete evidence did Samuel have of Saul's sin?

What was Saul's explanation of his sin?

Do you think he was honest?

What duty did Saul have to the people who wished to save some of the Amalekites and their cattle?

Who finally crushed the Amalekites?

Saul Charged with Sin

Contrast the character of Saul at this time with what he was when chosen for king.

How far did Saul fail to render acceptable obedience?

What is the danger of allowing soldiers to take the spoils of war for personal gain?

Can you give briefly the story of Achan's sin in this matter?

What was to be done with the spoil of an idolatrous city?

Saul Answers the Charge

Can you account for the fact that Saul still continued to affirm that he had obeyed the commandment of the Lord?

Are we safe on the ground that we have obeyed a majority of God's commands?

How did Saul feel about the presence of Agag in Gilgal?

On what ground can you justify the destruction of the Amalekites?

For what purpose did the people wish to bring back sheep and oxen?

Did this noble purpose atone for their sin?

When is a sacrifice acceptable to God?

Saul Sentenced for Sin

In what does Jehovah take delight? State and discuss two purposes of animal sacrifice.

What is meant by rebellion being as witchcraft?

What had been Saul's attitude toward witchcraft?

Define the words rebellion and stubbornness.

What is meant by teraphim?

Can you state Saul's sentence as given by Samuel?

Had Saul had any previous warning of his possible rejection?

Relation to Our Aim

What do you know of the nation of Amalekites?

State and discuss the three facts to remember.

State and discuss the three lessons to remember.

Lesson V—May 1, 1955

DAVID ANOINTED

Lesson Text

1 Sam. 16: 1-13

1 And Je-ho'-vah said unto Sam'-u-el, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from being king over Is'-ra-el? fill thy horn with oil, and go: I will send thee to Jes'-se the Beth'-le-hem-ite; for I have provided me a king among his sons.

2 And Sam'-u-el said, How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me. And Je-ho'-vah said, Take a heifer

with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to Je-ho'-vah.

3 And call Jes'-se to the sacrifice, and I will show thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee.

4 And Sam'-u-el did that which Je-ho'-vah spake, and came to Beth'-le-hem. And the elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, Comest thou peaceably?

5 And he said, Peaceably; I am come to sacrifice unto Je-ho'-vah: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jes'-se and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

6 And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on E-li-ab, and said, Surely Je-ho'-vah's anointed is before him.

7 But Je-ho'-vah said unto Sam'-u-el, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have rejected him: for *Je-ho'-vah seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but Je-ho'-vah looketh on the heart.

8 Then Jes'-se called A-bin'-adab, and made him pass before Sam'-u-el. And he said, Neither hath Je-ho'-vah chosen this.

9 Then Jes'-se made Sham'-mah

to pass by. And he said, Neither hath Je-ho'-vah chosen this.

10 And Jes'-se made seven of his sons to pass before Sam'-u-el. And Sam'-u-el said unto Jes'-se, Je-ho'-vah hath not chosen these.

11 And Sam'-u-el said unto Jes'-se, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he is keeping the sheep. And Sam'-u-el said unto Jes'-se, Send and fetch him; for we will not sit down till he come hither.

12 And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look upon. And Je-ho'-vah said, Arise, anoint him; for this is he.

13 Then Sam'-u-el took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of Je-ho'-vah came mightily upon David from that day forward. So Sam'-u-el rose up, and went to Ra'-mah.

Golden Text.—*"I delight to do thy will, O my God"* (Psalm 40: 8.)
Devotional Reading.—Psalm 78: 70-72.

Daily Bible Readings

- April 25. M..... Jehovah Selects David (Psalm 89: 19-37.)
- April 26. T..... Jesse Sends David to Saul (1 Sam. 16: 14-23)
- April 27. W..... David's Reign (2 Sam. 7: 18-26.)
- April 28. T..... David's Faith in God (Psalm 27)
- April 29. F..... David and Goliath (1 Sam. 17: 41-49)
- April 30. S..... David and Jonathan (1 Sam. 18: 1-9)
- May 1. S..... David, Servant of God (Ezek. 34: 20-31)

TIME.—1063 B.C.

PLACES.—Ramah and Bethlehem.

PERSONS.—Samuel, Jesse, David, and other sons of Jesse.

Golden Text Explained

1. Delight will cause us to search.

People who find a peculiar pleasure in doing the will of God, in living the kind of life the Lord intends for them to live, will search the scriptures daily to know more of the will of God. They will have that intense demanding desire for the sincere milk of the word which newborn babes have for the food which makes their bodies grow. (1 Pet. 2: 1-4.) There are people in the church, the family of God, who can go for weeks and months without reading their Bible, without taking any food for the soul. This is done because they do not have a genuine delight in doing the will of God. And, of course, when people no longer find joy and satisfaction in doing the will of God, they are in love with the world and the ways of the world. There is no

middle ground; one either loves God and his ways or he loves the world and its ways. The people of Berea searched the scripture? daily to learn the will of the Lord. (Acts 17: 10.) This diligent daily examination of the scriptures was the result of, as well as the proof of, their delight in doing the will of God. People who are determined not to do the will of God never search the scriptures to learn his will. They may read the Bible with the hope of finding some fault or of proving their side of an argument. But that sort of reading is far different from reading carefully and prayerfully that we may learn what to do so that we may delight ourselves to the fullest by doing the will of our Father.

2. Delight will remove distractions.

There are many distracting elements

in the world about us, things which divert our interest in things heavenly and consume our energy which should be spent in doing the will of the Lord. A genuine delight in doing the will of God will remove these distractions and make it possible for us to place our affections on things above and use our energy in doing the things which we have learned and received from the apostles. (Phil. 4: 9.) A man who delights to do the will of God will go to church Sunday night instead of seeing a picture show or a ball game. The man who delights to do the will of God will not allow his lodge duties to keep him away from church. The woman who delights to do the will of the Lord will not allow her club meeting to keep her from going to a Bible class or to prayer meeting. Young people who find their greatest delight in doing the will of the Lord will not allow school functions, parties, or recreation to keep them from church duties.

3. Delight will insure consistency. Too many people are inconsistent in their love and devotion to the Lord and his church. They are the hot-today-cold-tomorrow type. They attend church and serve and worship God from a sense of duty, which sense sometimes has a strong hold on them and sometimes it weakens. People who have a genuine delight in doing the will of God have an even and consistent compelling motive. They are doing the very thing they love and enjoy most when they are serving and worshiping God. They do not have to sacrifice their first love to do the will of God, for their love is doing the will of God. Since they are doing the thing they love most, they find it easy to be consistent in doing the will of God.

4. Delight will insure abundant service. People who take a great delight in their work always do better work than they could possibly do if they disliked it and had to drive themselves to do it. If we serve God solely from a sense of duty, we will find that we will do only that which we think we have to do to get to heaven. The reason why many do not go to church Sunday night and to prayer meeting Wednesday night is because they serve and worship God from a sense of duty, and they are doing just what they think they have to do, that which God specifically commands, to get to heaven.

They do not find a verse which commands them to go to worship twice on Sunday, nor do they find a verse which commands them to go to prayer meeting Wednesday night, nor do they find a verse which specifically commands them to attend every service of a gospel meeting, and they think they can absent themselves from these church meetings and still go to heaven. Whereas, if they could find their greatest delight in serving and worshiping God, doing God's will, they would not miss a single one of these meetings. Often we are tempted to try to determine just how little of our income we can give to the Lord and still get to heaven. But since giving of our money for gospel purposes is the will of the Lord, if we delight in doing his will, we will find pleasure in giving. Finding pleasure in giving, we will give liberally, abundantly. So the greater delight we find in doing the will of God, the more abundantly will we serve him. And the more abundantly we serve God, the greater will be our reward.

5. Delight can be cultivated. As our physical sense of taste can be cultivated to enjoy certain foods which at first are unpalatable, so our moral and spiritual sense of taste can be cultivated to find delight in certain activities which at first are not pleasant and agreeable. A delight for church attendance and fellowship with brethren can be cultivated. One can learn to enjoy doing personal work, teaching privately, visiting the sick, aged and infirm. There are three things essential to the cultivation of this delight, (a) Constant reading of the Bible to learn what is the mind, attitude, or disposition of the Lord; learning to think the thoughts of God. (b) Prayer, frequent prayer, that God will renew a right spirit within us (Psalm 51:

11.) Pray to be like Jesus; ask God to help us put on the new man which is being renewed after the image of Jesus. (Col. 3: 9, 10.) And (c) start doing the things you wish to find delight in doing. We do not cultivate an appetite for spinach by watching others eat it; we learn to relish it by eating it. So we learn to delight in doing the will of God by doing it constantly, fervently, prayerfully, sincerely, and with gratitude in our hearts for the ability and opportunity to do it.

Introduction

Some fifteen years elapsed between the events of our last lesson and this one, and of the affairs of the kingdom during this time we know very little. However, we are told that Samuel refused to come to see Saul after the meeting which occurred when Saul came back from the campaign against the Amalekites. At the close of that meeting three things occurred which are of interest to us. (a) Saul made a confession of his sin. He admitted that he had violated the commandment of God and had not kept Samuel's word, but he still urged in his behalf that he did so because he was afraid of the people. It is very probable that church leaders make that mistake rather often. Sometimes elders advise the preacher to move to another place because they are afraid the people will not stand for his plain preaching. It is possible that some preachers, do not condemn sin in high places because they are afraid of the people. Public opinion is still a powerful force in the thinking and conduct of people, (b) Saul insisted that Samuel go to worship with him in order to save his face before the public. Hear him as he pleads, "Honor me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship Jehovah thy God." (1 Sam. 15: 30.) He was willing to admit his sin to Samuel, but did not wish the elders of Israel to find out about it. Of course, they

would know something was wrong when the big sacrifice was not held as planned, but Saul felt he could handle the affair in such way that the people would not know that he had sinned so as to be rejected as king. Admitting our sins to a select circle of friends who are already acquainted with our weaknesses is not nearly so humiliating as a public confession of those sins and humble request for their forgiveness and their prayers on our behalf. While the latter is much more difficult, it will do a lot more to cure us of our weaknesses and serve as a healthy warning to keep others from doing wrong, (c) Samuel executed Agag the king of the Amalekites. After Samuel had gone to worship with Saul, he called for Agag. The record says that Agag came cheerfully to Samuel. Perhaps he thought Samuel would be more merciful following the period of worship. Agag was so sure he would be spared that he said, "Surely the bitterness of death is past." However, translations and commentaries treat this incident and Agag's words differently. Many think the verse should read that Agag came trembling and said, Death is bitter. Samuel based his actions on the wickedness of Agag. As Agag's sword had made women childless, so Agag's mother was to be made childless. By this Samuel simply meant that Agag was to reap what he had so often sowed.

Exposition of the Text

I. Samuel Sent to Bethlehem (1 Sam. 16: 1-6)

How long wilt thou mourn for Saul? Samuel grieved not only because Saul was wicked, but because he had been rejected as king over Israel. Since he was obligated to accept God's decisions and decrees as final and right, he should have ceased to mourn. His continued mourning appeared to suggest that he did not wish to accept God's decision in the matter. So this is a reproof of Samuel. "We who see Saul's whole career, and know how deeply he fell, are in danger of discrediting his high qualities: but those who were witnesses of his military skill and prowess, and saw him and his heroic son raising the nation from its feebleness and thralldom to might and empire, must have given him an ungrudging

admiration. David's dirge (2 Sam. 119-27) and Samuel's long mourning and the unqualified obedience which he was able so quickly to extort from a high-spirited people unused to being governed bear decisive testimony to his powers as a ruler and commander in war." (Pulpit Commentary.)

Jesse the Bethlehemite From Ruth 4: 18-22 and 1 Chron 2: 5-12, we learn the genealogy of Jesse and David. Jesse was the grandson of Ruth the Moabite and the great-grandson of Rahab of Jericho. He was a prominent citizen of Bethlehem.

If Saul hear it, he will kill me. Samuel feared to anoint another to be king of Israel, for Saul would surely treat it as an act of treason. Even if Saul's respect for Samuel

would keep him from punishing him, he would surely destroy Jesse and his sons if he learned that one of them had been anointed.

Say, I am come to sacrifice to Jehovah. Fearing that his trip to Bethlehem would cause Saul to accuse him, Samuel was told to take a heifer as a sacrifice. There was nothing unusual in Samuel going to various communities to hold worship and to teach the people. Some have criticized the Bible here on the ground that God told Samuel to use duplicity in this case. It was not a case of duplicity, but a case of withholding a bit of information for the sake of protecting both the nation as a whole and a family which was to supply Israel with its next king. Nor was Samuel sent on a disloyal and unpatriotic mission. Neither Samuel nor David, who was then just a child, could be accused of trying to overthrow the government of Saul. The anointing of David did not mean that he was to become king immediately, but it did mean that he was to be in training and that he was to become king when Saul had run his course.

Elders of the city came to meet him. The elders met Samuel with fear and trembling because his visit to the city might mean that a severe judgment of God was to be pronounced upon the city or some individual in the city.

Sanctify yourselves, and come with me. The process of sanctifying themselves consisted of bathing, putting on clean clothes, refraining from touching anything unclean, and perhaps the cultivation of a solemn and reverent attitude of mind. Samuel made sure Jesse and his sons were properly sanctified for the occasion.

II. Human Standards Disregarded (1 Sam. 16: 6-10)

Look not on his countenance. The sons of Jesse came before Samuel in the order of their birth. Eliab was the eldest. Samuel saw in Eliab a fine specimen of humanity. If he had been left to human wisdom, he would have been willing to look no further for one to take the place of Saul. But Jehovah told him not to look upon the countenance, or the height of his stature. Saul was a fine specimen of humanity so far as physical stature was concerned. In fact it was his physical qualities which made him acceptable to the people. But the job of being king of

God's people took more than a good physical stature. And being a leader among God's people today requires more than being handsome, a good hand-shaker, and having a good joke for every occasion and the ability to tell it in an interesting manner.

Jehovah looketh on the heart. God's ways are not man's way, nor does he think as man thinks. (Isa. 55: 8, 9.) Man looks on the outward appearance; he puts too much stress on the physical and formal. That was true in Samuel's day; it is still true. Human nature has not changed. Churches of Christ are in grave danger in this generation of attaching far too much importance to expensive buildings, big cooperative programs which attract the attention of the worldly wise and powerful, while they fail to see and use the little opportunities to save the lost on the wrong side of the railway. Jehovah looks on the heart, which is neither black nor white, poor nor rich. The clothes through which he sees the heart do not change appearances one way or the other. Wealth, position, and social standing often determine whether we will accept a person or not; but these things do not enter into God's measurement of a man, unless he allows them to influence the condition of his heart.

Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. Only three of Jesse's sons are named here, but the others are named in 1 Chron. 2: 13, 14. However, in that place only seven are named, so in the meantime one of them must have died. And we are told there that David had two sisters.

Jehovah hath not chosen these. We do not know how Jehovah conveyed the idea to Samuel that these were not to be anointed. He seemed to enjoy a familiarity with God that few men ever enjoyed. Perhaps the absence of a statement of any kind was all Samuel had to assure him that these sons were not chosen. When David came, the Lord said, whether audibly or not we cannot know, This is he. If this be true, here is a good example of respecting the silence of Jehovah.

III. David Selected and Anointed (1 Sam. 16: 11-13)

Are here all thy children? When Jehovah had refused to accept any of the seven sons of Jesse, Samuel was made to wonder if there were others. In this we see his faith in

God manifested. Jehovah had told him to anoint a son of Jesse, and yet there was no indication that any of these seven would be acceptable to Jehovah, so Samuel thought there must be another son who was not present.

He is keeping the sheep. This gives us an insight to the work and environment of David. His work was such as to assist him to develop a healthy vigorous body and his environment was such as to contribute to purity of heart and enlargement of soul to appreciate the handiwork of God.

We will not sit down till he come. From this we conclude that this selection of one of Jesse's sons took place while preparations were being made to eat a feast, and Samuel refused to eat until he had found the one who was to be anointed. David was not far away and soon stood in the presence of Samuel.

Now he was ruddy. This statement is generally accepted to mean that David had red hair, which, together with a light delicate complexion, is very rare in the east and is admired and desired by many. The statement, *of a beautiful countenance*, means that he had beautiful eyes. And his general appearance is expressed in the words, *and goodly to look upon*. From this description we gather that he did not fall below his

brothers in outward appearances, except for height of stature.

Samuel took the horn of oil. Olive oil was the usual element used in anointing. The anointing is said to have taken place in the midst of his brethren. If more than the family of Jesse were present, we have no mention of them. Nor do we have any reason to believe that Samuel told Jesse or any of his sons why he anointed David. And there were many reasons why he should not make known the purpose of the anointing. If this had been known, Saul would most likely have learned about it, and he would not have rested until he had destroyed David. In later years he made many efforts to kill David, but, even then, David did not claim a right to the throne on the ground that he had been anointed by Samuel. There is no record that he ever told Saul. And when David became king, after Saul's death, he was anointed. (2 Sam. 2: 4.)

The Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon David. By this we are to understand that David was protected and guided by the Holy Spirit. His mental, spiritual, and moral development was aided and guided by the Spirit of the Lord. This aid was short of the point of compulsion so that David was still a free moral agent and was held accountable to God for what he did.

Relation to Our Aim

1. Place to be remembered. Bethlehem is first mentioned in Gen. 35:

16 under the name of Ephrath. In verse 19 we are told that this is the same as Bethlehem. It was mentioned in connection with the death of Rachel, the beloved wife of Jacob. The book of Ruth gives us a picture of family life in the town and gives us domestic background of David, its most illustrious citizen. Jesus, who can hardly be called a citizen, was born there as a son of David, adding new and greater luster to the city.

2. Persons to remember, (a) Jesse, the father of David and the grandson of Ruth and Boaz. (b) David, who became the most beloved king of the Israelites, and the one on whose throne Jesus is said to be reigning at present. (Luke 1: 32: Acts 2: 29-36.)

3. Facts to remember, (a) Samuel mourned for Saul even though he

knew Saul had rebelled against God, showing the loving Interest we ought to have for any and all who are wayward, (b) Samuel, though conscious of the fellowship of God, shared with all men the fear of death by the hands of a wicked man. Though we believe ourselves prepared to meet God, there is still something about death which we fear and dread, (c) Samuel did not tell David, nor his family, the full purpose of his anointing, thus saving him added dangers and responsibilities.

4. Lessons to remember, (a) Man judges by outward appearance, which is not always a fair and accurate standard by which to judge. Man cannot see motives, so is unable to judge accurately in all cases. Hence, we should be slow to pass judgment on anybody and should never be harsh and unsympathetic in our judgments, (b) We should not value physical appearance above the moral

and spiritual qualities of people. A pretty face can blind one to a lot of ugly faults; fine clothes can cover up a lot of ugly dispositions; and wealth can cause us to forget to look for dishonest principles in men. (c) Some of the world's greatest men have come from the humblest of sur-

roundings. David was a keeper of sheep. When we do well our jobs in lowly stations, we are most likely to be promoted to that for which we are prepared. If we murmur and complain of our lot in lowly stations we will never be prepared for anything better.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of this lesson?
Repeat the golden text from memory.
Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.
Golden Text Explained
What causes people to search the scriptures?
What people are mentioned in the Bible as searching the scriptures daily?
How keen and demanding should our desire for spiritual food be?
Name some distractions which tend to keep us from doing God's will.
Can you show how a delight in doing God's will will overcome these distractions?
How does delight in the will of God affect our consistency?
What is the connection between delighting in God's will and abundant service?
How does delighting in the will of God affect our giving of money?
How can our delight to do God's will be cultivated and increased?

Introduction

What was Samuel's attitude toward Saul after his battle with the Amalekites?
What do you think of the depth and sincerity of Saul's confession of sin?
Are church leaders today liable to allow fear of the people to determine their actions?
How did Saul try to cover his sin from the people?
Can you show how we may be guilty of this same sin?
Can you show how Agag reaped what he had sowed?

Samuel Sent to Bethlehem

Why did Samuel continue to mourn for Saul?
Was God pleased that Samuel mourned so long for Saul? Why?
What do you know of David's ancestors?
Why did Samuel fear to anoint David?

Was Samuel guilty of duplicity when he said he was going to sacrifice in Bethlehem?
Did Samuel intend that David should become king as soon as he was anointed?
How did the elders of Bethlehem receive Samuel?
What preparation did Samuel ask the people to make to attend the sacrifice?

Human Standards Disregarded

In what order did Jesse's sons come before Samuel?
How many sons did Jesse have?
Can you name them?
How was Samuel impressed by the first son? Why?
Contrast the way God judges man with the way man judges.
Can you show why Samuel is a good example of a man respecting the silence of God?

David Selected and Anointed

How did Samuel manifest his faith in God on this occasion?
How did David's work and environment affect his development?
What do you know of David's physical appearance?
Did David know for what purpose he was being anointed?
Do you think David ever told Saul that Samuel anointed him?
What part did the Holy Spirit have in David's life from this time forward?

Relation to Our Aim

What do you know of the history of Bethlehem?
For what is the place best known?
What the connection between David and Jesus physically and spiritually?
State and discuss as time allows three facts to be remembered.
State and discuss three lessons to be remembered.

Lesson VI—May 8, 1955

DAVID AND GOLIATH

Lesson Text

1 Sam. 17: 32, 37-51

32 And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Phi-lis'-tine.

37 And David said, Je-ho'-vah that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Phi-lis'-tine. And Saul said unto

David, Go, and Je-ho'-vah shall be with thee.

38 And Saul clad David with his apparel, and he put a helmet of brass upon his head, and he clad him with a coat of mail.

39 And David girded his sword upon his apparel, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go

with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him.

40 And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in the shepherd's bag which he had, even in his wallet; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Phi-lis'-tine.

41 And the Phi-lis'-tine came on and drew near unto David; and the man that bare the shield went before him.

42 And when the Phi-lis'-tine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him; for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and withal of a fair countenance.

43 And the Phi-lis'-tine said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And the Phi-lis'-tine cursed David by his gods.

44 And the Phi-lis'-tine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the birds of the heavens, and to the beasts of the field.

45 Then said David to the Phi-lis'-tine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a javelin: but I come to thee in the name of Je-ho'-vah of hosts, the God of the armies of Is'-ra-el, whom thou hast defied.

46 This day will Je-ho'-vah deliver thee into my hand; and I will

smite thee, and take thy head from off thee; and I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Phi-lis'-tines this day unto the birds of the heavens, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Is'-ra-el,

47 And that all this assembly may know that Je-ho'-vah saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is Je-ho'-vah's, and he will give you into our hand.

48 And it came to pass, when the Phi-lis'-tine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hastened, and ran toward the army to meet the Phi-lis'-tine.

49 And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Phi-lis'-tine in his forehead; and the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell upon his face to the earth.

50 So David prevailed over the Phi-lis'-tine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Phi-lis'-tine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David.

51 Then David ran, and stood over the Phi-lis'-tine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith. And when the Phi-lis'-tines saw that their champion was dead, they fled.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and Jehovah was with him” (1 Sam. 18: 14.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 27: 1-6.

Daily Bible Readings

- May 2. M. Goliath a Man of Gath (1 Sam. 17: 1-11)
- May 3. T. David in the Camp of Israel (1 Sam. 17: 12-39)
- May 4. W. Faith in Jehovah (1 Sam. 17: 41-51)
- May 5. T. God's Deliverance (Psalm 44: 1-8)
- May 6. F. Effects of David's Triumph (1 Sam. 17: 50-54)
- May 7. S. Saul Envied David (1 Sam. 18: 1-9)
- May 8. S. The Evils of Envy (Gal. 5: 19-21)

TIME.—1063 B.C.

PLACES.—Ephes-dammin and the vale of Elah.

Persons.—David, Saul, Goliath.

Golden Text Explained

1. What is wise behavior? Our text says that David behaved himself wisely, and the implication is that we should follow his example. Hence, we need to know something about what constitutes wise behavior, (a) Solomon says, "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." (Prov. 9: 10.) Hence, we will expect to find in David the

fear of Jehovah. And if we are wise, we will cultivate that fear in our hearts. It is a healthy sign when people reverence God for his mercy and goodness, and stand in awe before the power and holiness of God. But when people take liberties with God and talk with h'm in the same casual and indifferent manner in which they talk with their equals, they give evidence of a lack of godly

fear that should characterize the creature in the presence of his Creator and Judge, (b) David trusted in Jehovah. It is wise for us to put our trust in him rather than in our wealth, or learning, or numbers. "Trust in Jehovah, and do good. . . . Commit thy way unto Jehovah; trust also in him, and he will bring it to pass." (Psalm 37: 3, 5.) No one has a right to claim that his walk is wise who does not both fear Jehovah and trust in him. (c) David loved the company of good men. Paul says, "Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals." (1 Cor. 15: 33.) Solomon advised men to "walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous." (Prov. 2: 20.) Also he said, "Walk with wise men, and thou shalt be wise; but the companion of fools shall smart for it." (Prov. 13: 20.) Parents should be careful to help their children in the selection of their companions, for their character and usefulness on earth, and even their eternal happiness, may well depend on those companions. And adults cannot afford to disregard this rule, for they are not beyond the possibility of being led away from God into worldliness. (d) David was industrious. Industry is a part of wise behavior. Paul tells us to work with our hands. (1 Thess. 4: 11; 2 Thess. 3: 7-12.) Solomon says, "He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man. . . . The desire of the sluggard killeth him; for his hands refuse to labor." (Prov. 21: 17a, 25.) Idleness and worthlessness go together. Idleness is the hotbed in which grow all kinds of sin. In later life it was idleness that contributed to David's great sin. David tarried at Jerusalem when the army went out to battle, and he had leisure to lie in bed and walk on the roof of

his house. (2 Sam. 11: 1, 2.) A lot of hard work would have saved him from this sin and the terrible consequences that followed.

2. Reward for wise behavior, (a) Our text says that Jehovah was with David because he walked wisely. There can be no greater blessing in one's life than to have God with him to bless and protect him. David says that those who trust in Jehovah are as Mount Zion, they cannot be moved. (Psalm 125: 1.) As long as we behave wisely he can and will be with us; but if we forget or refuse to behave wisely, God cannot be with us, and we will fail. David describes the blessedness of him who fears Jehovah in Psalm 128, and the reader should study that scripture. The presence of Jehovah in one's heart gives courage and assurance in the conflicts of life, and it gives a calm quiet repose when one pillows his head to rest at night. It is a generous and unearned reward for our wise behavior, (b) David was given prosperity. Solomon says, "He that soweth righteousness hath a sure reward." (Prov. 11: 18b.) For his wise behavior David was taken out of the place of a poor shepherd and made to enjoy all the luxuries of the palace. (c) David was promoted. "The reward of humility and the fear of Jehovah is riches, and honor, and life." (Prov. 22: 4.) The wise behavior of David included the fear of Jehovah and humility, so he reaped the reward by being promoted from shepherd to king and by being honored by all Israel. Not only did Israel honor him, but as long as the Bible is read and the psalms are loved David will continue to receive honor and praise from the people who enjoy reading them.

Introduction

In 1 Sam. 16: 13, 14 we have not only a connecting link between our lessons, but we have a shift of emphasis from the dethroned and rejected Saul to the anointed David. In verse 14 we are told that the Spirit of Jehovah departed from Saul; in verse 13 we are told that the Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon David. The coming of the Spirit upon David meant that he had the protection and guidance of Jehovah that he might grow into the character he should possess to be the king God intended he should be.

While the departure of the Spirit from Saul meant that he no longer enjoyed the presence of Jehovah in his heart and life so that he was left to degenerate in heart and life and sink to the lowest depths of which humanity is capable. In the absence of the Spirit of Jehovah and evil spirit troubled him. Whether this was demon possession or an ugly violent disposition due to his rejection may be impossible to determine.

David was introduced to Saul and the royal court because he was a

musician and could bring relief to Saul by playing on his harp. David is described as being "skillful in playing, and a mighty man of valor, and a man of war, and prudent in speech, and a comely person; and Jehovah is with him."

About the time David was getting acquainted with Saul the Philistines came up near Jerusalem for battle. We are told they encamped at Ephesdammin, which means "boundary of blood." The army of Israel was just across a deep ravine, for such is the meaning of one Hebrew word used, in the lowest part of a valley. This ravine was impassable except in certain places, and this accounts for the two armies being within hearing distance so many days without any actual fighting. Each day Goliath came out to challenge Israel

to single combat to decide the victory. No soldier in Israel, including Saul, felt able to accept the challenge. Saul offered his daughter in marriage, great riches, and freedom to the father of any soldier who would kill the giant. When David heard the challenge, he wondered why an uncircumcised Philistine should be allowed to embarrass the army of Israel. Since no one else had the courage to meet Goliath, David volunteered to do it. His older brother told him to go back home and tend the sheep, but Saul heard of his offer and sent for him. David felt that he and God were a majority in any situation. We need this faith now; the church and God can do anything anywhere so long as it is God's will. The only thing that hinders is our lack of faith and initiative.

Exposition of the Text

I. David Volunteers to Fight Goliath
(1 Sam. 17: 32, 37.)

Let no man's heart fail because of him. In verse 11 we have a statement of the effect Goliath's challenge had upon Israel—"they were dismayed, and greatly afraid." David's faith in Jehovah kept him from being afraid of the giant. It would seem, therefore, that there was very little faith in the army of Israel. David is spoken of as a youth in verse 42. Saul was much older than David, yet we find David giving counsel to Saul and comforting him with reference to the dangers about him. David's faith was sufficient not only to keep him calm in the face of danger, but to quiet the fear of others. People of great faith and courage can render great service in times of crises and danger.

Thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine. This is given as a reason why the men of Israel were not to let their hearts fail because of Goliath's challenge. We can easily understand the attitude of Eliab, the elder brother of David, when David first mentioned his willingness to fight the giant. (Verse 28.) Eliab thought him to be proud, impertinent, presumptuous, and naughty in heart. Older brothers, especially if they have been away from home some time, cannot realize that the baby in the family can grow up and be capable of great things. David would not allow his brother's attitude to keep him from doing what he felt he should do, so he volunteered.

Jehovah that delivered me . . . will deliver me. David told Saul of experiences he had had with a lion and a bear, the two most destructive wild beasts with which shepherds had to contend. We are told that the bear was worse even than the lion. We are not to conclude that David felt he had been miraculously saved by the Lord, but he certainly gave the Lord the credit. This was providential rather than miraculous; and David's victory over Goliath was providential rather than miraculous. In a miracle there is obvious and indisputable evidence of the presence of God, while in providence the presence of God and the help of God is not so obvious. The student should notice the basis of David's belief that Jehovah would help him kill Goliath. He reasoned that, since God had enabled him to kill the lion and the bear, he would do the same to help him kill the enemy of God's people. In most cases it is possible for us to have a rational basis for our faith. His faith was so strong that Saul was convinced and said, "Go, and Jehovah shall be with thee."

II. David Prefers Tried Weapons (1 Sam. 17: 38-40)

Saul clad David with his apparel. Saul was an unusually large man. (1 Sam. 10: 23.) We have no indication that David was a large man; hence, the apparel and armor of Saul were more of a hindrance than a help to David.

I have not proved them. David

was not accustomed to using such weapons in battle. He did not know how to use them; they were too big and heavy for him; and they were not the type which would permit his exercise of faith in his accustomed way. Saul's effort to arm David suggests the efforts of worldly-minded church members today trying to get the people of God to adopt worldly-wise ways of accomplishing the purposes of God. We need the faith of David and the trust which he exercised when he said he would continue to use that which was tried and proven. We know God will be with us and prosper us in our work if we continue to do things in his appointed way, but we have no assurance that he will bless us and give us success if we resort to the worldly-wise ways and put our faith in new organizations, combinations, and untried methods. It is better to stay within the limits of that which has been proven.

And his sling was in his hand. David put off the apparel and armor which Saul had put on him and took only his staff and sling, his familiar tried weapons. The shepherd's staff was a heavy piece of hardwood capable of delivering a stunning blow to a wild beast in close contact, while the sling was capable of delivering a stone with great force at many yards distance. If the sling missed at long range, the staff was used at close range.

Chose him five smooth stones. Travelers say that this section abounds in stones made smooth by the force of swift water rolling them in the bed of the stream. Some are large, but many of them just the right size to use in such a sling as David used. It was not uncommon for men to develop the ability to throw stones with accuracy of a practiced marksman of today. We read of left-handed men who could sling stones at a hairbreadth and not miss. (Judges 20: 16.), which means accurate marksmanship. David had used his sling to protect his sheep, and he knew what he could do with it. He would have been foolish indeed to trade his proven weapon for that which he did not know how to use.

III. David Victorious in Battle (1

Sam. 17: 41-51)

He disdained him. These words describe the attitude of Goliath toward David. It seems that David's physi-

cal appearance contributed to the disdain which Goliath had for him. He had the countenance and complexion of a boy, and Goliath was insulted by the fact that a mere lad had been sent to answer his challenge.

Am I a dog? When Goliath saw the staff in David's hand, he felt that David was armed sufficiently for nothing more than a dog. He felt insulted that David would use nothing more on him than he would use on a dog. For some reason Goliath either failed to notice the sling or preferred to make no mention of it for the sake of his pride.

The Philistine cursed David by his gods. This means that Goliath called upon his gods to pat a curse upon David; he called upon his gods to help him in the fight. He believed his gods to be more powerful than David's God, so expected the victory to be his and wished to give the honor to his gods. Dagon, supposed to be composed of human face and hands with lower limbs like a fish, was one of the Philistine gods. (1 Sam. 5: 2.) Goliath then made quite a speech to David, telling him what he would do for him. He said he would give his flesh to the birds of the heavens and to the beasts of the field.

I come to thee in the name of Jehovah. After Goliath finished speaking, David made even a longer speech. His faith in Jehovah led him to say that he came in the name of Jehovah. He was willing to put his God on trial against the god of Goliath. His faith in God gave him the courage to stand face to face with a giant and confidently and calmly say that victory would be his.

Will Jehovah deliver thee into my hand. The humility is outstanding in this statement. He did not try to take the glory for the victory. He was not going to kill the giant with the help of God, but God was going to destroy Goliath through David as his instrument. Preachers often tell about what great things they have done, modestly adding, through the help of God; they should say with humility and gratitude that God has done these things through me as his unworthy servant. (Acts 14: 27.)

That all the earth may know. After stating in much the same words of Goliath what he would do with the flesh of the giant, David stated the

purpose of his battle with him. His first purpose was that all the earth might know that there is a God in Israel. David was not anxious that all the world should know there was a great soldier in Israel who could kill a giant with a sling. He was not anxious for all the world to know that he could lay aside the accepted weapons of the day and defeat an army single-handed. But he was extremely anxious that all the world should know about his God. His sole desire was the glory of Jehovah; he forgot self completely.

Jehovah saveth not with sword and spear. This does not mean that Jehovah could not have used swords and spears to save his people, for he did use such in many battles; but it means that he is not limited to such then modern weapons. We would say that Jehovah is not limited to atom and hydrogen bombs, long-range bombers and guided missiles. The battle is Jehovah's regardless of the weapons his people happen to have. The king of Syria thought Jehovah was a god of the hills, so he decided to fight on the plains, but found to his sorrow that the battle is Jehovah's on the plain is well as in the hills. (1 Kings 20: 22ff.) We should realize that our God is not dependent upon modern methods which are contrary to the principles taught by the inspired apostles. The fact that a method is as old as the New Testament is no evidence that God cannot give us the victory through the use of it, provided we use it in faith.

David hastened, and ran toward the army. This gives an idea of the faith and courage which David had. When they had finished their speeches, the giant started toward David. This did not frighten David. He did not wait for Goliath to come all the distance between them; he ran to meet him. May this not suggest to us the attitude in which we are to engage our enemies today? With courage and zeal we are to go forward and seize our opportunities

and responsibilities, not waiting for them to overtake us and force themselves upon us.

Smote the Philistine in his forehead. With unerring accuracy David planted the first stone in the forehead of the giant. If he had been afraid of the giant, he would likely have failed. Courage enables us to do many things we would fail to do if we were afraid. A coward is more than half-whipped before he starts. Self-trust often causes one to be overconfident and think he can do things he never can accomplish. But David's trust was not in self; his trust was in Jehovah. He had self-confidence because of past experiences, but his trust was in Jehovah, who had blessed him in the past.

There was no sword in the hand of David. This re-enforces the former statement that David rejected the weapons of Saul. He did not take Saul's sword along; in case his aim was poor or the force of the stone was not sufficient to overcome the giant. He depended wholly on the weapons he had tried and found worthy. Having no sword himself, David ran to the giant and took his sword with which to cut off his head.

When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. The Philistines were not willing to abide by the proposition their champion made for forty days, that the army of the defeated one should become the servants of the victorious one. When they saw a mere lad slay their giant, they realized their cause was hopeless. The God who could give a lad the victory over Goliath could as easily give the army of Israel the victory over the Philistine army. There was nothing left to them but flight. The army of Israel followed them all the way to their principal cities, slaying many of them. They then returned to plunder the camp of the Philistines. We are told that David finally took the head of Goliath to Jerusalem and that he took charge of the giant's weapons.

Relation to Our Aim

1. Places to remember. The student should use a good Bible dictionary to learn about Socoh and Azekah, for these are towns mentioned in connection with Ephes-dammin, where we are told the Philistines gathered for the battle with Israel. Other passages to study in this connection

are Josh. 15: 35; 1 Kings 4: 10; compare 2 Chron. 11: 7; 28: 18. Why a place within hearing distance of Ephes-dammin should be called the vale of Elah and be treated as a separate place is difficult to understand. These places are located about fourteen miles southwest of Jerusalem.

2. Persons to remember. Attention has been called to Saul and David in previous lessons. Goliath, the giant of Gath, is worthy of some study. The student will be interested in his description as given in 1 Sam. 17: 4-7. For comparison the student should read 2 Sam. 21: 18-22.

3. Facts to remember, (a) Though Saul was a "mighty man of valor," he did not have the courage to meet Goliath in individual combat. David did have the courage to do so and honestly won the esteem and respect of Israel in preference to Saul, (b) David used practical common sense in refusing to wear Saul's apparel and armor and by insisting that he be allowed to use weapons which he had proved. (c) The Philistines were bold as long as their champion was on his feet, but when he went down their courage vanished. David's courage was not based on men, but

in God, so remained the same at all times.

4. Lessons to remember, (a) While youth usually looks to the aged for encouragement and comfort, we find youth giving encouragement and comfort to the aged in this lesson. Youth in possession of God's Spirit can counsel and guide the aged who have not the Spirit, (b) David did not reject Saul's armor because he put his trust in his staff and sling; his trust was in Jehovah. We should not put our trust in organization, methods, or men, but in the God of David who gives success to all who put their trust in him. (c) We should not allow the disdain and disrespect of our enemies to frighten and discourage us. If God be pleased with us, it matters little whether men love or hate us; if God be displeased with us, the love and respect of men will avail us nothing.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the places, persons, and time of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

What is the first step in wise behavior?

How can one both fear and trust Jehovah?

What effect does one's companions have on his behavior?

What responsibility do parents have in the selection of companions for their children?

How is behavior affected by idleness?

What is the greatest reward David received for his good behavior?

What does the presence of God in one's heart do for him?

What is the connection between good behavior and prosperity?

What is the reward of humility and fear of Jehovah?

Introduction

What did the presence of the Spirit of Jehovah mean to David?

What did the denature of the Spirit from Saul mean for him?

What particular thing brought David and Saul together?

Describe the locations of the armies of Israel and the Philistines?

How long did they remain in these locations before fighting began?

What challenge was made by the Philistines?

What did Saul offer to the soldier who would accept the challenge?

Who was David's older brother?

What did he think of David for accepting the challenge?

What often hinders us from doing the seemingly difficult or impossible?

David Volunteers to Fight Goliath

What effect did Goliath's challenge have on Israel?

How did David seek to comfort and encourage Saul?

What criticism did David have to overcome when he volunteered to fight?

What experiences gave David confidence that he could kill the giant?

What is the difference between providential and miraculous aid from the Lord?

Can you distinguish between David's self-confidence and his trust in the Lord?

David Prefers Tried Weapons

Why did David refuse to use Saul's weapons?

What lesson can we learn from David's refusal to use untried weapons?

What weapons did David prefer?

How were they used?

What is said of the accuracy of men with their slings?

David Victorious in Battle

What was Goliath's attitude toward David?

What do you know of Goliath's god?

What use did Goliath make of him?

How did David show his humility while talking to Goliath?

What did David want all the earth to know?

How did David teach that God is not limited as to the weapons he uses?

How did David show his faith and courage as the battle started?

How did David kill the giant?

What effect did Goliath's death have on the Philistine army?

Relation to Our Aim

What do you know of the various places mentioned in our lesson?

What do you know about Goliath as a man?

State and discuss as time will permit the facts to remember.

What can enable youth to give counsel to the aged?

What lesson have you learned about putting your trust in men, methods, and organizations?

What does our lesson teach about the relative value of pleasing God and men?

Lesson VII—May 15, 1955

SAUL ATTEMPTS TO KILL DAVID

Lesson Text

1 Sam. 18: 5-16

5 And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and it was good in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

6 And it came to pass as they came, when David returned from the slaughter of the Philistines, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with timbrels, with joy, and with instruments of music.

7 And the women sang one to another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands.

8 And Saul was very wroth, and this saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom?

9 And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.

10 And it came to pass on the morrow, that an evil spirit from God came mightily upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as he did day by day. And Saul had his spear in his hand;

11 And Saul cast the spear; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall. And David avoided out of his presence twice.

12 And Saul was afraid of David, because Je-ho-vah was with him, and was departed from Saul.

13 Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people.

14 And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and Je-ho-vah was with him.

15 And when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he stood in awe of him.

16 But all Israel and Judah loved David; for he went out and came in before them.

Golden Text.—"And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul was David's enemy continually" (1 Sam. 18: 29.)

Devotional Reading.—1 Sam. 18: 1-4.

Bible Readings

- May 9. M.....David and Jonathan (1 Sam. 18: 1-9)
- May 10. T.....David and Michal (1 Sam. 18: 17-21)
- May 11. W.....Saul Seeks David's Life (1 Sam. 18: 22-25)
- May 12. T.....Jonathan Warns David (1 Sam. 19: 1-7)
- May 13. F.....Michal Assists David (1 Sam. 19: 8-17)
- May 14. S.....David at Ramah (1 Sam. 19: 18-24)
- May 15. S.....Test of Friendship (1 Sam. 20: 12-23)

Time.—1063 B.C.

Place.—Gibeath, the home of Saul.

Persons.—David and Saul.

Golden Text Explained

1. Basis for Saul's fear. Our text says that Saul was afraid of David. And it is suggested that it was an ever-growing fear. What was the reason for this fear of an innocent and harmless young man? (a) It was not Saul's knowledge of the fact that Samuel had anointed David to be the next king, for we can be rather certain that Saul had no knowledge of that. Samuel was careful to keep Saul from knowing the purpose of

his visit to Bethlehem, making his mission there to offer a sacrifice. (1 Sam. 16: 2-5.) (b) Nor could Saul's fear of David be caused by the aggressiveness of David in trying to take the throne away from Saul, for there is nothing in the record to indicate that David made any efforts to take the throne. Even when Saul had made continued efforts to kill David, and David could have killed Saul in self-defense, he refused to

do so on the ground that he must not touch the Lord's anointed. (1 Sam. 24: 6; 26: 11.) David seems to have had the impression that he should wait for the Lord to remove Saul from the throne and give it to him instead of having the idea that he was to take the initiative in removing Saul and taking the throne for himself. (c) Saul's knowledge of his own failure and of his rejection by Jehovah on account of his rebellion against the Lord was one reason for his being afraid of David. When a man realizes his own failure and is not willing to get right with God, it is natural for him to begin to suspect others and be afraid he will be supplanted by them. It is easy for old preachers who realize their inability to get the job done to become suspicious and jealous of younger and better qualified men. Saul knew he had failed; he knew Jehovah had rejected him; he had been told that Jehovah would seek a better man (1 Sam. 13: 14); and he had reason to think David might be the man. (d) David's qualifications, his possession of traits Saul did not have, made Saul think David might be the man whom Jehovah had selected to replace him on the throne. If he did not fear that David would take the throne from him during his lifetime, he feared that he might take it from his son.

2. **Basis for Saul's animosity.** Animosity is defined as "active enmity." Not only did Saul have ill-will toward David, but it was such ill-will and enmity that it burst into action. He was not only afraid of David, but he hated him. (a) Envy was one

reason for Saul's animosity. Envy is defined as follows: "Chagrin or discontent at the excellence or good fortune (of another); resentful begrudging." Another statement from Webster, "One is envious who discontentedly desires or covets the good fortune or attainments of others." Realizing his failure as king and seeing in David those very attainments and characteristics the lack of which caused him to fail, Saul envied him. It is so easy for us to be envious of the good fortune and the attainments of others. We are taught to rejoice with those who rejoice over their good fortune, but it is easier many times to be "discontentedly desirous" of the other man's good fortune. It is easy for preachers and teachers to envy the attainments and wealth of others, (b) Saul was jealous of David's popularity, and this led him to hate David. David was young, good looking, a good mixer with people, and the people soon fell in love with him. His fight with Goliath caused the people to sing his praises. This added fuel to the fire of Saul's jealousy. "One is jealous who suspects and resents the diversion to another (esp. to one regarded as a rival) of what one loves or prizes as one's own." (Webster.) Saul considered David his rival for the affection of the people and for the throne. He saw David getting and enjoying the love and praise of the people which he felt was due to himself. He resented this diversion of love and praise to David. This is jealousy, and many people have it but do not recognize it as the sin which the Lord condemns.

Introduction

Two matters between lessons are worthy of our attention. First, in 1 Sam. 17: 55-58, we are told that Saul asked Abner to tell who the lad was who killed Goliath, while in 1 Sam. 16: 18-23 we read that David had been brought to Saul's home to play the harp for his relief when he was troubled by the evil spirit. If David had already been living in his home and playing the harp for him, why did he not recognize him when he put his apparel on him and gave him his weapons? The answer is found in the fact that the historian anticipated some events in the former chapter and that consequently there is some overlapping, not contradictions. "The true chronology of this

part of David's life is the following 1. David is anointed by Samuel; 2. Carries provisions to his brethren in the army; 3. Fights with and kills Goliath; 4. Is received into the king's court; 5. Contracts a friendship with Jonathan; 6. Incurs Saul's jealousy; 7. Retires to his father's house; 8. Is after some time sent for by Saul to soothe his melancholy with his harp; 9. Again excites Saul's jealousy, who endeavors to smite him with his javelin. This anticipation between the fourteenth and twenty-third verse comes in, in the order of time, between verses 9 and 10 of chapter 18, where the breach is apparent." (Dr. Warburton in Clarke's Commentary.)

The second item of interest is the

covenant of affection between David and Jonathan. Jonathan was Saul's eldest son and heir to the throne, if the throne is to stay in Saul's family, or if Jonathan outlives Saul. Of course, the throne did not stay in Saul's family, nor did Jonathan outlive his father. They both died in battle with the Philistines, Saul committing suicide when he saw Jonathan killed and the army being put to riot. (1 Sam. 31: 1-6.) Following the battle in which David slew Goliath, David was brought into the presence of Saul, still holding in his hand the head of the giant. Jonathan stood and listened to the conversation between Saul and David.

He admired David for his courage and prowess, and we are told that "the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." Jonathan loved David so much and so truly that he even broke with his own father over Saul's mistreatment of David. (1 Sam. 20: 30ff.) And when Jonathan was killed in battle, David wrote, "How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan is slain upon thy high places. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, Passing the love of women." (2 Sam. 1: 25, 26.)

Exposition of the Text

I. David Wins the Heart of the Army (1 Sam. 18: 5)

And David went out. We are told that the verb of this statement has a "technical signification" and that it suggests going forth on military missions. David was under the authority of Saul and went wherever Saul saw best to send him.

And behaved himself wisely. Wisdom is expected in the aged and is appreciated and praised in a youth. Promotion often cultivates one's ego and sometimes make a fool of one who would have succeeded if he had not been promoted too rapidly. David was taken from the simple shepherd's life and environment right into the palace of the king. He lived with the king's family and became the bosom friend of the heir apparent. He had every reason to think well of himself and to feel that he was making unusual progress, and he might easily have attributed his advancement to his own powers. Had he done so, he would have been a failure. He was humble enough to know that he was indebted to Jehovah for all this advancement, and for the abilities which made such advancement possible. So he kept himself in the background. He put his trust in Jehovah and allowed him to determine the paths in which his feet should go. Review the golden text of Lesson VI for further comments on David's wise behavior.

Saul set him over the men of war. Adam Clarke says this means that David was made generalissimo, or field marshal. But if this be true, David was demoted when he was later made a captain over a thousand.

(Verse 13.) We can hardly mink of Saul making a young man head of all the army of Israel simply because he had killed a giant with a sling.

Good in the sight of all the people. This shows that all the people were well pleased with the conduct of David and they were glad that he had received honor by being promoted. The purpose of this section is to show the rise of David's popularity and the falling of Saul in the estimation of the people. Special mention is made of the fact that Saul's servants were pleased with this promotion of David, so we may conclude that his promotion was in that division of the army or government.

II. Saul Jealous of David's Popularity (1 Sam. 18: 6-9)

Returned from the slaughter of the Philistine. This does not refer to the killing of Goliath, though Philistine is in the singular. (The margin gives the word in the plural.) Saul was engaged in war with the Philistines all during his reign, and fell on his own sword when he saw his army fleeing in defeat from the Philistine army. So this must refer to some minor encounter which David and his men had with a band of the Philistines.

Women came out of all the cities. Early in the history of the Israelites women took a prominent part in celebrating the victories of their armies. Miriam led the women in a song of victory when the Egyptians were slain in the Red Sea. (Ex. 15.) The instrument which the women used "is well known as being used among

the ancient Egyptians: it was made of brass, and had *three*, sometimes more, brass rods across; which, being loose in their holes, made a jingling noise when the instrument was shaken." (Adam Clarke.)

Saul hath slain his thousands. As the women danced and played, they sang a song of praise to Saul and David. No doubt Saul was well pleased with the first line of the song when he was praised for slaying his thousands. But when he heard the second line in which they praised David for slaying his ten thousands, he was not so well pleased. This seems to be the first concrete evidence of the fact that David was taking his place in the affections of the people generally. It came into his consciousness with the effect of a thunderbolt, but it came in such way that there was nothing he could do about it without revealing his jealousy. So he simply eyed David from that day forward.

And Saul was very wroth. David was so careful of his behavior and conducted himself so wisely that Saul could not get anything he said or did with which to accuse him. He gives us a good example of walking so circumspectly that those who are our enemies cannot find anything in us with which to reproach the name of our Lord; and if they say anything evil against us, they will be put to shame by our godly life. The church could be a mighty force in the world for good if every member lived such a life before the world all the time. Having nothing for which to blame David, Saul simply boiled with anger inside.

What can he have more but the kingdom? Here we find Saul's jealousy coming to the surface and expressing itself. Saul said the women had given David such praise that it would be impossible for them to give him anything better without giving him the kingdom. This gives us a hint of what he was thinking. God had rejected Saul for his sin and had told him that another would be chosen to take his place. He lived in mortal fear that God would do that during his lifetime. Seeing the popularity of David with the people, Saul wondered if God was about to give the kingdom to David. Envy and jealousy drove Saul (a) to be blind to actual conditions. His sins had made it impossible for God to be with and bless him; the presence

of Jehovah with David had made him a favorite with the people and capable of accomplishing great feats. But Saul refused to see these things as they actually existed. Envy will blind us to actual conditions. (b) Envy and jealousy caused Saul to attribute base motives to David and others. He thought David was studiously attempting to alienate the hearts of the people from him. This was far from the truth. David loved Saul and would have served him faithfully all Saul's life if he had not been blinded by his sins so that he made such service impossible to David, (c) Saul's envy and jealousy made him a most wretched man. There was a time when Saul was happy, when he enjoyed the love and praise of his people. But that happiness left him when envy, suspicion, and jealousy entered his heart. Happiness and jealousy can no more live in the same heart than light and darkness can stay in the same room. (d) Jealousy drove Saul to murder. Though he did not actually kill David, he would have done so if the providence of God had allowed. His hatred and his studied attempts to kill David constitutes murder in God's sight. (1 John 3: 15.) James teaches us that jealousy will cause one to stoop to any vile deed if one thinks such deed is necessary to gain his point. (James 3: 16.) We should avoid envy and jealousy with more care than we avoid deadly poisons in our food.

III. David Escapes Death at the Hands of Saul (1 Sam. 13: 10-16)

Prophesied in the midst of the house. The word *house* here must mean family. So we conclude that Saul was conducting devotions in the midst of his family. But the form of the verb *prophesied* is never used of real, true prophecy, but rather of counterfeit. (Pulpit Commentary.) In the place of *prophesied*, the margin has the word *raved*. "Really Saul was in a state of frenzy, unable to master himself, speaking words of which he knew not the meaning, and acting like a man possessed. In all this there was something akin to the powerful emotions which agitated the true prophet, only it was not a holy influence, but one springing from violent passions and a disturbed state of mind." Some think Saul only pretended to conduct religious exercises so that he might not

create any suspicions in David's mind which would put him on his guard. The passage is difficult; it has three difficulties. First, the evil spirit from God. It is difficult to determine whether this was a demon which God permitted to possess Saul, or an evil disposition which God allowed Saul to cultivate. Second, what did Saul do when he prophesied? And third, how could David's playing on a harp bring relief to one who was possessed by a demon, or who had cultivated an evil disposition which drove him mad? The student may read as many learned commentators as are available and get as many answers to these difficulties. But the study is interesting and worth while.

And Saul cast the spear. We are told that ancient kings always carried their spear wherever they went. In all the drawings which have come down to us kings are pictured without exception with a spear in hand. So it was not unusual for Saul to have a spear in his hand even though he might have been conducting religious exercises in his house. Our text says that David "avoided out of his presence twice," meaning that Saul threw the spear twice and David escaped both times. Whether the two attempts were during one meeting, or one assembly of the family, is not clear.

And Saul was afraid of David. We are told that Saul was afraid because of the presence of Jehovah with David, but what he was afraid David would do is not clear. The most reasonable thing to think is that Saul was afraid David would take the kingdom away from him.

Made him his captain over a thou-

sand. This promotion in the army was made in order for Saul to get David away from him. There is the possibility that Saul thought David might be slain in battle, for immediately following our text we have the record of Saul offering David his daughter as wife if he would bring in one hundred fore-skins of Philistines; and this offer is said to have been made in the hope of destroying David without using his own hands. (1 Sam. 18: 22-29.) But if the promotion was made to get rid of him, he was disappointed. David's wise behavior in the higher office made him all the more popular with the people. Fighting against God is a sure road to failure. Saul was so rebellious and so determined to have his own way that he would even attempt to outwit and outmaneuver the Lord.

He stood in awe of him. The word *awe* means "power to inspire dread or fear, . . . veneration, solemn wonder." Saul realized his helplessness before the rise of David in the estimation of the people. He realized more and more that Jehovah was with David and that he had forsaken him on account of his sin. So he stood in awe, in solemn wonder, at the power of one in fellowship with God.

All Israel and Judah loved David.

This is the reward of the wise behavior which has been mentioned a number of times in the Holy Spirit's description of David. The separate mention of Judah here before the division of the kingdom may be on account of David being a member of the tribe of Judah. Some think it is proof of the late date of the writing of the books of Samuel

Relation to Our Aim

1. Persons to remember, (a) Saul and David have been given special attention in former lessons, (b) Jonathan. He was the eldest son of Saul. (1 Sam. 31: 2.) He was the constant associate and confidant of his father. (1 Sam. 20: 1, 2.) He broke with his father for a time on account of his love for David. (1 Sam. 20: 30-34.) He was willing for David to be the next king, and he hoped to be second to David. (1 Sam. 23: 16-18.) But he made peace with his father and lost his life in defending his father's cause. (1 Sam. 31: 1, 2.) David wrote a lamentation over Saul and Jonathan which the reader

should read carefully. (2 Sam. 1: 19-27.)

2. Facts to remember, (a) David's wise behavior won for him the love and respect of men and the blessings of God. (b) Saul's jealousy and hatred for David won for him the disrespect and ill will of many people and the condemnation of the Lord, (c) Praise given by the women singers caused David to rejoice and Saul to be jealous of David.

3. Lessons to remember, (a) David lived uprightly before the people; he was clean and open in his life with nothing to hide from the people. Young men who follow such a course

of conduct will surely win the favor and respect of people generally, (b) To the extent that one allows envy and jealousy to enter and rule his heart, he opens the gate for many vile and destructive sins to enter and ruin his life. Saul was jealous of David because Jehovah was with David and refused to be with Saul, and this jealousy led him to attempt to murder David. The step from jealousy to murder may be shorter

than we realize. (c) When Jehovah rejected Saul and refused to be with him, Saul had no power to restrain the evil in his life. Men who reject God find it difficult to fix and stay with a definite standard of right and wrong. He whom God abandons usually gives himself up to evil imaginations and devices. A comparison of David and Saul should lead any one to realize the value of the presence of Jehovah in his heart.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of this lesson?

Give the golden text from memory.

Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

Why can we be sure Saul did not fear David because of his knowledge of David's anointing?

What evidence do we have that David did not try to take the throne from Saul?

Give and discuss two reasons why Saul was afraid of David?

What is the meaning of animosity and of envy?

Why did Saul envy David?

Can you describe the action of a jealous person?

Why was Saul jealous of David?

Is it possible for one to be guilty of jealousy and not know it?

Introduction

Discuss as time permits the chronology of this part of David's life.

Who was Saul's eldest son?

Can you name other sons of Saul?

On what occasion did Jonathan begin to love David?

What did David say of Jonathan's love for him?

David Wins the Heart of the Army

What was David's relation to Saul in the beginning of this lesson?

What is said of David's general behavior?

What promotion was David given, and did this effect his wise behavior?

What did people generally think of Saul's promotion of David?

Saul Jealous of David's Popularity

On what occasion did David receive special praise from a group of women?

What do you know of the instruments used by the women?

What song did the women sing, and what its effect on Saul?

What was there in David's life which is a good example for us today?

How did Saul's jealousy first find expression?

Name and discuss as time permits four things Saul's envy and jealousy drove him to do.

What does James teach us about the influence of jealousy in our hearts?

David Escapes Death at the Hands of Saul

What was Saul doing in the midst of his house?

Discuss as time permits the three difficulties of this passage.

How did Saul attempt to kill David?

Why was Saul afraid of David?

How was David promoted at this time, and why did Saul promote him?

What is meant by the statement that Saul stood in awe of David?

What is said of the extent of the favor of David with the people?

Relation to Our Aim

What do you know of Jonathan in his relation to Saul and to David?

State and discuss three facts to remember.

State and discuss three lessons to remember.

Lesson VIII—May 22, 1955

DAVID SPARES SAUL'S LIFE

Lesson Text

1 Sam. 26: 5-12, 17, 21

5 And David arose, and came to the place where Saul had encamped; and David beheld the place where Saul lay, and Ab'-ner the son of Ner, the captain of his host: and Saul lay within the place of the wagons, and the people were encamped round about him.

6 Then answered David and said to A-him'-e-lech the Hit'-tite, and to A-bi'-shai the son of Ze-ru'-iah, brother to Jo'-ab, saying, Who will

go down with me to Saul to the camp? And A-bi'-shai said, I will go down with thee.

7 So David and A-bi'-shai came to the people by night: and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the place of the wagons, with his spear stuck in the ground at his head; and Ab'-ner and the people lay round about him.

8 Then said A-bi'-shai to David, God hath delivered up thine enemy

into thy hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear to the earth at one stroke, and I will not smite him the second time.

9 And David said to A-bi'-shai, Destroy him not; for who can put forth his hand against Je-ho'-vah's anointed, and be guiltless?

10 And David said, As Je-ho'-vah liveth, Je-ho'-vah will smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall go down into battle, and perish.

11 Je-ho'-vah forbid that I should put forth my hand against Je-ho'-vah's anointed: but now take, I pray thee, the spear that is at his head, and the cruse of water, and let us go.

12 So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's head; and they gat them away: and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither did any awake; for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from Je-ho'-vah was fallen upon them.

17 And Saul knew David's voice, and said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And David said, It is my voice, my lord, O king.

21 Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David; for I will no more do thee harm, because my life was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.

Golden Text.—"Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you" (Luke 6: 27.)

Devotional Reading.—Psalm 31: 1-8.

Daily Bible Readings

- May 16. M. David Seeks to Escape Saul (1 Sam. 26: 1-6)
- May 17. T. Saul Falls into David's Hands (1 Sam. 26: 6-8)
- May 18. W. David Spares Saul (1 Sam. 26: 9-14)
- May 19. T. Loving One's Enemy (Luke 6: 22-36)
- May 20. F. God's Care for His People (Psalm 91: 1-16)
- May 21. S. Saul Blesses David (1 Sam. 26: 21-25)
- May 22. S. Saul and the Woman of Endor (1 Sam. 28: 7-25)

Time.—1060 B.C.

Place.—The wilderness of Ziph.

Persons.—Saul, David, and Abishai.

Golden Text Explained

1. Gospel superior to the law. The law of Moses demanded that people love their neighbors. (Lev. 19: 18.) But there is no precept demanding that they love their enemies. Nowhere is there a commandment of the law of Moses demanding kind treatment of an enemy. They were under orders to destroy the seven nations of Canaan. They were commanded to smite them, utterly destroy them, make no marriages with them, and show no mercy unto them. (Deut. 7: 2, 3.) They were commanded not to seek the peace nor the prosperity of the Ammonites and Moabites "all thy days for ever," because they "met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt, and because they hired against thee Balaam . . . to curse thee." (Deut. 23: 3-6.) This is exactly opposite to the teaching of Jesus in our text that we do good unto our enemies. So, while there is no verse which says for a Jew to hate his enemy, there are

plenty of passages which practically amount to that very thing. Hence, the law is correctly represented as teaching the Jews to hate their enemies and do evil to them. The Holy Spirit inspired some Jew to express joy in the thought that Babylon would be rewarded with sorrow in the measure which the Jews had suffered while in captivity, and to rejoice in the thought that children in Babylon would be dashed against the rocks. (Psalm 137: 8, 9.) David reckoned the enemies of God as his own enemies and said he hated them with a perfect hatred. (Psalm 139: 21, 22.) But Jesus teaches us that we are to love our enemies and the enemies of God. We are to do good to them that they may cease to be our enemies and be saved.

2. Examples of this love. The love which we are to have for an enemy is not in every respect the same feeling we have for our family. Jesus gave the story of the good Samaritan to teach us how to love our neigh-

bor. (Luke 10: 25ff.) The Samaritan loved the man in need when he did good unto him. The priest and the Levite did not love their neighbor. Jesus gave us an example of loving our enemies when he left heaven, suffered the cruel death of the cross for us in spite of the fact we were his enemies. (Rom. 5: 8ff.) And while he was on the cross he prayed for those who were causing him such suffering. (Luke 23: 34.) When Stephen was being stoned to death, he prayed for the Lord to lay not that sin to the charge of his enemies. (Acts 7: 60.) These are examples of the love we are to have for our enemies. From the depths of our heart we are to desire their welfare; we are to pray that they may be blessed in such way as will cause them to turn to the Lord, and we are to do such deeds of kindness as are needful and as will cause them to be convinced of the beauty and value of the Christian life.

3. **Purpose of this teaching.** Why are we to love our enemies, and do good to them who hate us? In Matthew's record we are told to do this "that ye may be sons of your Father

who is in heaven." (Matt. 5: 45.) It is the nature of God to love even his enemies, so if we partake of his nature we will do the same. Hence, loving our enemies and doing good to people who hate us is a condition of being children of God and finally of going to heaven to enjoy eternal life. Again, Paul teaches that in so doing we overcome evil with good. (Rom. 12: 19-21.) Jesus loved his enemies so much and did them so much good that he caused some to love him in return. "We love him because he first loved us." So the Lord wants us to love our enemies so they will in turn come to appreciate the fine life we live and will turn to follow our example. Hence, the purpose of loving our enemies and doing good to them is to turn them to the Lord that they may be saved. Since our salvation depends on following the teaching of our text, and since the salvation of our enemies may depend on our following the teaching, we see how important the teaching of this text is. We should also appreciate the superiority of the gospel over the law of Moses in requiring us to love our enemies and do good to them that hate us.

Introduction

One outstanding thing in the chapters between our last lesson and the one for today is the love and faithfulness of Jonathan for David. The reader should read carefully the whole of chapter 20. It starts by relating a conversation between the two men in which Jonathan tries to assure David that Saul does not intend to kill him, because Saul never does anything without letting his eldest and favorite son know about it. So they form a plan by which the intention of Saul may be known to them, and Jonathan is to let David know the results. In the working of the plan Jonathan showed so much interest in David's welfare that Saul accused him of disloyalty to the extent of treason, cast a reflection on his mother, hinted that he should not inherit the throne, and attempted to kill him with his spear. Jonathan then had a secret meeting with David, expressed his love for him and his loyalty to him, and renewed the covenant between them and sent David away.

One of the saddest and most despicable deeds of Saul during his long career of rebellion is recorded in

chapter 22. An Edomite, one of Saul's servants named Doeg, happened to see the priest give food and arms to David. (1 Sam. 21: 1-9.) He told Saul what the priest had done. Saul called the priest before him for an explanation, and the priest told Saul that so far as he knew David was a faithful servant of the king and he knew nothing of the personal matters between David and Saul. Then Saul commanded his soldiers to slay all the priests of the city, Nob. The soldiers refused, but Doeg was glad to perform the bloody task. He killed eighty-five priests, their wives and children, and their cattle. Abiathar, the son of the priest, seems to be the only one who escaped, and David kept him with him.

In chapter 24 we have the record of Saul and David being in the same cave at the same time. David cut off a piece of Saul's robe to show that he could have killed him. He stood at a distance and told Saul of this. The reader will enjoy reading David's speech. (Verses 8-15.) Saul acknowledged his sin, admitted David

to be a better man than he, said he realized that David would be king and that the kingdom would be established in his hand, and asked him to swear not to cut off his family

or his name. David swore as requested, but did not trust Saul enough to commit himself into his hands, and the events of our lesson today prove his wisdom in not doing so.

Exposition of the Text

I. David Pursued by Saul (1 Sam. 26:

5)

David . . . came to the place where Saul had encamped. For several years David was on the move from one place to another to keep from being taken by Saul and his army. He had about six hundred men with him. (1 Sam. 25: 13.) Between attacks by Saul, David had some leisure time. It was while resting between attacks that David met and married Abigail, the widow of the worthless Nabal who refused to give David and his men food while they were in his vicinity. (1 Sam. 25.) Since Nabal is said to have been a man of Maon, a city in the wilderness of Ziph, it is usually supposed that David made his headquarters in and around this town while in this section of the country. Due to the mountainous country in the southern half of Judah and the caves which abounded in that section, David lived there most of the time Saul was trying to capture him. For some reason the people of Ziph did not like David and, for the second time (1 Sam. 23: 19), they betrayed his location to Saul. Samuel was now dead (1 Sam. 25: 1), and Saul was no longer afraid of his influence. So when the Ziphites told him that David was in Maon, he gathered his standing army of three thousand men and determined to capture the sole remaining threat to his throne. Saul encamped not too far from David's hiding place. David had a watchman who kept him informed of the movements of Saul and his army.

Abner the son of Ner, the captain of his host. Abner was a first cousin of Saul. (1 Chron. 9: 36.) And after Saul's death Abner succeeded in keeping Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, on the throne as the successor of his father for about seven years. While trying to negotiate a union of all Israel, Abner was slain by Joab, who held the same position under David which Abner held under Ishbosheth.

Said lay within the place of the wagons. When the army camped for the night, the wagons were arranged so as to form a barricade for use in case of attack. Instead

of the word for *place* in the text, the margin has *barricade*. For special security the king was bedded down within the barricade. But David had a plan which he wished to try to relieve the pressure Saul was putting on him, so he was willing to attempt to get within the barricade, even though he had to risk his life to do so.

II. David Shows Mercy to Saul (1 Sam. 26: 6-12)

Then answered David. In this verse we have mention of several persons, about some of whom we will hear much hereafter. Ahimelech the Hittite is mentioned as being a member of David's band. If David's men had been measured for quality of character during his outlaw period, they would not have made an extra good impression. The Hittites should have been destroyed when Israel entered Canaan, but even as late as Solomon we read of kings among them. (1 Kings 10: 29.) Then there was Abishai, the son of Zeruiah. This Zeruiah is said to be a sister to David (1 Chron. 2: 13-16), and yet she is said to be the daughter of Nahash. (2 Sam. 17: 25.) We therefore suppose that David's mother was married to Nahash and bore him two daughters, Abigail and Zeruiah; then she was married to Jesse and bore him eight sons. Zeruiah was the mother of Joab, who later became the commander of David's army. He was David's nephew.

Who will go down with me? David called for a volunteer to go with into the camp of Saul. Abishai was willing to share the dangers with his uncle, so he immediately volunteered to go on the dangerous mission.

Saul lay sleeping within the place. After a long hard march the soldiers were ready for rest and sleep. However, it is not to be supposed that an army would be so careless or that the watchman would sleep so soundly that two men could penetrate to the very center of the camp without being detected unless the Lord should have had a hand in it. So in verse 12 we are told that "a deep sleep from Jehovah was fallen upon them."

Whether David knew this or not we have no way of knowing. Undoubtedly his actions were determined by the same providence of God that brought the sleep upon Saul's army. His actions could be so determined without his being conscious of it the same as Joseph's actions were determined by the providence of God, and yet he did not know it. (Gen. 45: 4-8.) Saul's ever-present spear was stuck in the ground at his head, indicating the location of the king.

God had delivered up thine enemy. These words mean more than the fact that Abishai saw an opportunity to rid David of his enemy. Abishai interpreted Saul's location and situation to mean that God intended for David to destroy Saul. Abishai thought the Lord had arranged for Saul to be left unguarded and had providentially led David into the camp without being seen so that he might kill Saul and take the throne. Knowing how David felt toward Saul, Abishai wished to relieve him of the actual work of killing him, so he asked the privilege of pinning Saul to the ground with his spear. He insisted that he could do it with one stroke so there would be neither noise nor struggle to hinder them in their escape from the midst of the camp.

Destroy him not. Again David refused to be responsible for the death of Saul. He did not refuse on the ground that Saul was not worthy of death, for he realized that Saul was guilty of a number of crimes for which he ought to die. The slaying of the priests at Nob was sufficient grounds for his execution, but David was not public executioner and had no authority to do such a thing. He could have slain him on the grounds of self-defense and, no doubt, the people would have counted him justified in the act. But David refused on the ground that Saul had the anointing oil of Jehovah upon him. He took the view that a man who had that anointing oil on him belonged to Jehovah and that Jehovah was the only One who had a right to deal with him in the matter of removing him from the throne or taking his life.

Jehovah will smite him. David knew that Jehovah intended he should have the throne, but he was determined to wait for God to give it to him in his way and at his own time. David did not know whether Saul would die a natural death or perish in

battle, but he felt that when the proper time should come Jehovah would take Saul in the way which seemed fitting to him. This was a case of respecting the office a man held while he had no respect for the man himself. It might do us good to cultivate a greater respect for our public offices so that we would be slower to lay harsh hands of criticism on those who hold the offices.

So David took the spear and cruse of water. David took these so he would have positive proof to offer Saul that he had been in position to kill him. This is not the first time David had been in position to kill Saul and had refused. (1 Sam. 24: 1-4.) When David had reached the place where he left his band of men, he called back to Saul and Abner to chide Abner for being so careless of his duty to protect the king. He implied that Abner claimed to be a valiant soldier, yet an enemy had penetrated the center of the camp and had taken the spear of the king. He insisted that Abner was worthy of death for such carelessness.

III. Saul Admits His Sin (1 Sam. 26: 17, 21)

And Saul knew David's voice. David seems not to have waited until the morning to call back to Saul and Abner, so in the darkness they had to depend on the voice to know who was doing the talking.

Is this thy voice, my son David? The fact that this is put in the form of a question does not necessarily imply that Saul did not know who was calling. The fact that the writer says Saul knew David's voice and the fact that Saul uses the name of David prove conclusively that Saul did know to whom he was talking. It is interesting to notice how Saul addresses David. He called him his son. When he was put to shame for the way he treated David, he would become somewhat mellow in his attitude toward David and call him his son. Since David had lived in his home and had been a personal servant to him, it was natural for him to address him in this way.

It is my voice, my lord, O king. And David addresses Saul as lord and king. This was the formal way of addressing the king. The word lord was used by inferiors when addressing superiors, so David recognized Saul, the king, as his superior in spite of the fact that Saul would

have given his dearest possession to kill him.

Then said Saul, I have sinned. And Saul had said this before. (1 Sam. 15: 24, 25.) Saul would even weep as he confessed his sins against David. (1 Sam. 24: 16.) Yet there was little depth of sincerity in his emotions. And David knew him well enough not to trust his life in his hands when Saul was weeping over his sins. Men can sin until they do not have the power to quit their sins even though they are sorry for them. Any one who deliberately tampers with sin, thinking that so long as he is capable of being sorry for his sins he can quit them at will, is a fool. Saul, weeping for his sins but continuing to be slave of his sins, should be a warning to us to quit tampering with sin and ask God to help us live right while there is hope.

I will no more do thee harm. How sincere Saul was in making this promise we have no way of knowing, but we have no record of his ever trying to kill David after this. According to the chronology we are following, Saul lived about four years

after this promise was made. David had said to him that his persecution was driving him from the land of Jehovah into the lands of other gods, and that was as much as to say, Go, serve other gods. (1 Sam. 26: 19.) This touched Saul as deeply as anything could touch him, and he not only promised to do David no harm, but asked him to return to his own land so he might worship Jehovah.

I have played the fool. This is still the language of Saul, and how true it is! Fighting a good man and a loyal subject was foolish. But fighting against Jehovah was the height of folly. If the veil could be lifted and men who continually refuse to obey the gospel could see themselves as they will appear in the judgment, surely they would say with Saul, I have played the fool. And if worldly church members could see themselves as they will appear in judgment, they would surely say, I am playing the fool. Saul's sinful life and suicidal death should be a warning to all to be humble and obedient to every commandment of the Lord to the extent of our ability.

Relation to Our Aim

1. Places to remember. The wilderness of Ziph was south of Hebron and extended over quite an area. There was a town by the same name, and its remains are to be seen yet about five to six miles southwest of Hebron. Another place which has come into our lesson is Maon, the home of Nabal and Abigail, situated about seven miles south of Hebron. The hill of Hachilah is mentioned, but its identity is uncertain at present. It must have been on the highway, for David camped there evidently because it gave him a view of people coming to the area; and when he saw Saul coming and retreated into the wilderness, Saul encamped in the hill. (1 Sam. 26: 1-3.)

2. Persons to remember, (a) Abner, the son of Ner and cousin of Saul. See a Bible dictionary for further information. (b) Abishai, nephew of David, brother of Joab and Asahel; associated with Joab in the murder of Abner because he slew Asahel. (2 Sam. 3: 30.) During Absalom's rebellion, Abishai stayed with David. (2 Sam. 16: 9; 19: 21.) He saved the life of David from a giant named Ishbibenob. (2 Sam. 21: 15-17.) He won for himself unusual distinction by slaying three

hundred men in one fight. (2 Sam. 23: 18, 19.) (c) Zeruiah, David's sister (perhaps a half-sister) and mother of Abishai, Joab and Asahel. She must have been a strong character to give the world three such men.

3. Facts to remember, (a) David had such regard for one who had been anointed by the Lord that he would risk his own life rather than kill the Lord's anointed. (b) He preferred to use the power of moral suasion rather than the sword to effect peace between himself and his greatest enemy. (c) For brief moments Saul could see that he had played the fool, but he had allowed sin to master him so completely that he was unable to profit by the knowledge of his sin.

4. Lessons to remember. (a) David's attitude toward the Lord's anointed was in harmony with a deep-set principle. Though his life was in danger and his friends were impatient with him, he refused to violate that principle. Men of principle and conviction usually succeed; men void of principle and conviction are worthless, (b) David refused to take the throne from Saul; he insisted that God would give it to him when he was pleased to do so.

We should learn to wait in patience on the Lord; neither worry nor force will hurry the Lord to give us those things which are in his power solely to give us. (c) Realizing that one

has played the fool is good, but not good enough. One must have the courage and determination to quit his sin before he can entertain the hope of eternal life.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

Did the law of Moses command the Jews to hate their enemies?

Was there any teaching in the law which led them to deal unkindly with an enemy?

What was the attitude of Jews toward Babylon?

What was David's attitude toward his enemies and the enemies of God?

Are we to try to cultivate the same tender emotions for our enemies that we have for our family?

How did Jesus teach us to love our neighbor?

What example did Stephen leave us?

What reason does Jesus give for loving our neighbors and enemies?

What does Paul teach about doing good to our enemies?

What reason is given for the great importance of the teaching of our text?

Introduction

Tell briefly the story of Jonathan risking his life to save David.

Relate the story of the destruction of the priests at Nob.

Tell how David spared the life of Saul in the cave.

David Pursued by Saul

How many men accompanied David while escaping from Saul?

What happy incident occurred to cheer David about this time?

Who told Saul where he could find David?

What great man had died before the events of this lesson?

How was Abner related to Saul?

What do you know of Abner's activities after the death of Saul?

What precaution was taken for Saul's safety when he encamped?

David Shows Mercy to Saul

What foreigner was a member of David's band?

Can you name some of David's relatives who accompanied him?

Do you know the names of David's sisters?

Who volunteered to go with David into Saul's camp?

What made it possible for two men to enter Saul's camp and get away without being seen?

What did Abishai wish to do and why?

What had Saul recently done which made him worthy of death?

Why did David refuse to kill him, or allow his men to kill him?

What did David take from Saul as proof that he could have killed him?

How did David chide Abner and why?

Saul Admits His Sin

How did Saul know who was talking to him from such a distance?

How did Saul address David and how did David address Saul?

What about Saul's sincerity in making a confession of sin?

Can people sin until they cannot cease from sinning? (2 Pet. 2: 14.)

What promise did Saul make David?

What statement of David touched Saul most deeply?

What was the most foolish thing Saul was doing?

Is it possible that well-meaning people do the same thing today? How?

Relation to Our Aim

What do you know of the places mentioned in our lesson?

What do you know of Abishai?

Who was Zeruiah?

Who were her sons?

How did David show his high regard for the anointed of Jehovah?

What power did David prefer to use on Saul?

Why was Saul unable to profit by the knowledge of his sin?

State and discuss as time permits the three lessons to remember.

Lesson IX—May 29, 1955

DAVID MADE KING OVER JUDAH AND ISRAEL

Lesson Text

2 Sam. 2: 1-7; 5: 1-5

1 And it came to pass after this, that David inquired of Je-ho'-vah, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Ju'-dah? And Je-ho'-vah said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto He'-bron.

2 So David went up thither, and his two wives also, A-hin'-o-am the Jez'-re-el-i-tess, and Ab'-i-gail the wife of Na'-bal the Car'-mel-ite.

3 And his men that were with him did David bring up, every man with his household: and they dwelt in the cities of He'-bron.

4 And the men of Ju'-dah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Ju'-dah.

And they told David, saying, The men of Ja'-besh-gil'-e-ad were they that buried Saul.

5 And David sent messengers unto

the men of Ja'-besh-gil'-e-ad, and said unto them, Blessed be ye of Je-ho'-vah, that ye have showed this kindness unto your lord, even unto Saul, and have buried him.

6 And now Je-ho'-vah show lov- ingkindness and truth unto you; and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing.

7 Now therefore let your hands be strong, and be ye valiant; for Saul your lord is dead, and also the house of Ju'-dah have anointed me king over them.

1 Then came all the tribes of Is'-ra-el to David unto He'-bron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh.

2 In times past, when Saul was

Golden Text.—*“And David waxed greater and greater; for Jehovah, the God of hosts, was with him.”* (2 Sam. 5: 10.)

Devotional Reading.—Psalm 18: 1-16.

Daily Bible Readings

- May 23. M..... David's Family (2 Sam. 3: 1-5)
- May 24. T..... Joab Murders Abner (2 Sam. 3: 27-39)
- May 25. W..... David and the Ark (2 Sam. 6: 12-19)
- May 26. T..... Other Members of David's Family (2 Sam. 5: 11-16)
- May 27. F..... Death of Uzzah (2 Sam. 6: 6-11)
- May 28. S..... David Dances Before the Ark (2 Sam. 6: 16-19)
- May 29. S..... God's Message to David (2 Sam. 7: 18-29)

Time.—1055 to 148 B.C.

Place.—Hebron.

Persons.—David and the people.

Golden Text Explained

1. In the estimation of his people. Our text tells us that David grew greater and greater. And the reason for this growth is the fact that Jeho- vah was with him. One who tries to grow great without the help of God will become a self-inflated ego- tist. Saul tried to get along without and contrary to God, but ended his life in shameful failure. David recog- nized the right of God to control his life and so put his trust in him. Saul decreased but David increased. Of course David was unknown to the public when Samuel anointed him, but it was not long until he won the admiration and affection of the army by slaying Goliath; then he was taken to the palace to play for Saul and made other friends; soon he led the army on a successful campaign, and the women sang his praises, saying he had slain his ten thousands while Saul had slain only thousands. For a number of years suspicion was thrown on David because Saul ban- ished him from the court and tried

king over us, it was thou that led- dest out and broughtest in Is'-ra-el: and Je-ho'-vah said to thee, Thou shalt be shepherd of my people Is'-ra-el, and thou shalt be prince over Is'-ra-el.

3 So all the elders of Is'-ra-el came to the king to He'-bron; and king David made a covenant with them in He'-bron before Je-ho'-vah: and they anointed David king over Is'-ra-el.

4 David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years.

5 In He'-bron he reigned over Ju'-dah seven years and six months; and in Je-ru'-sa-lem he reigned thirty and three years over all Is'-ra-el and Ju'-dah.

to kill him. He was accused of dis- loyalty and treason. Of course all the men who were seeking the favors of the king would peddle these ac- cusations as widely as possible. David refused to strike back in self-de- fense either to do Saul physical harm or to expose him as a murderer and false accuser. But people observed David's attitude and actions, and as soon as they came to know him they appreciated and approved his way of life. His growth in popularity was not limited by anything un- seemly in him, but by his ability to meet and get acquainted with the people.

2. In his opportunities for service. When David was herding sheep, his opportunities for service were rather limited. However, he was not idle; he did not spend his time in ways which were of no value to him. He employed much of his time learning to play the harp, which proved of great value to him by unlocking the door of opportunity to serve the king.

With this advancement his opportunities for service were greatly increased. Eagerly he grasped these new opportunities and used them to prepare himself for greater things. Many of us whine about our lack of opportunity instead of using the little we have to open the way for greater things. Even while David was hiding out to save his life he was not idle; he was learning military tactics and making friendships which would help him immeasurably in the future. Upon the death of Saul, Judah immediately accepted David as their king, and this extended his opportunities for service beyond anything he had ever known. So well did he use these new opportunities for service that within seven years all Israel came to recognize him as their king. For the next thirty-three years he served his God and his people, growing in his ability to serve and growing in the appreciation of his people.

3. In his spiritual stature, David was incurably religious from his

youth. The psalms we have in our Bible give us a clue to his thoughts. The Holy Spirit does not use men so mechanically that a man who never meditated on spiritual subjects could write such songs as David wrote. These are the meditations of his heart in hours of solitude, in time of suffering, and in the hours of victory. "David's life and history, as written for us in those psalms of his, I consider to be the truest emblem ever given of a man's moral progress and warfare here below. All earnest souls will ever discern in it the faithful struggle of an earnest human soul towards what is good and best." (Carlyle.) Nor should we think of David as being full-grown spiritually when we first meet him; he grew spiritually through prayer, meditation, and suffering of hardships and enjoyment of victories just like all other men. There were times of recession (2 Sam. 11) as in our own lives; but the general trend was upward to greater, better, and holier living.

Introduction

Knowing that Saul's sorrow for his sin would not last long and that he was not safe as long as the people continued to betray him to Saul, David decided to seek refuge in Philistia. He made friends with Achish, the king of Gath. (1 Sam. 27.) He stayed there sixteen months. This is another dark blot on the pages of David's record. He deceived Achish and murdered to keep the king deceived. He made his living by plunder and destruction, and many in his company were wicked and base. (1 Sam. 30: 22.) He allowed the continued persecution of Saul, the treachery of the Ziphites, and the strain of waiting on the providence of God to give him the throne to cause him to lose faith and hope for a time. There is no more justification for David among the Philistines than for his sin with Bathsheba. Both are examples of a good man allowing temptation to get the best of him for a while, and they should serve as a warning to us to be careful and prayerful.

The last two scenes of Saul's life are recorded between lessons. In the first we see him going to the woman with a familiar spirit to learn the outcome of the impending battle with the Philistines. He asked that Samuel be brought up to give him this information. Saul presents a sorry

sight as he disguises himself and goes by night to see this sinful woman. Because of his sins Jehovah refused to give him a message either by dream, Urim, or prophets. (1 Sam. 28: 6.) Samuel reminded him of his sins, the rejection by Jehovah, the loss of his kingdom, and then told him of his impending defeat and death. The Philistines gathered for battle in Mount Gilboa, after expelling David from their ranks and so sparing him any part in the bloody conflict. The battle was one-sided, and Israel was soon in flight. Saul saw his sons fall in death, so fell upon his own sword to end his shameful, sinful life. While this battle was in progress, David was having one of his own to recover his family and the families of his soldiers. (1 Sam. 30.) Soon the news of Saul's death reached him in Ziklag, as well as the death of his friend Jonathan. David made great lamentation over them and wrote the son of the bow which is found in 2 Sam. 1: 19-27. The reader will enjoy reading it with meditation. It shows his love for Jonathan and his respect for the fallen king who had been anointed by Jehovah. His treatment of the Amalekite who brought him news of the death of Saul and claimed to have a part in it also shows his great respect for the anointed of the Lord.

Exposition of the Text

I. David Anointed in Hebron. (2 Sam. 2: 1-4a)

David inquired of Jehovah. David had been among the Philistines for sixteen months. The princes of the Philistines distrusted him so much that they refused to allow him to go with them, in spite of the king's consent (1 Sam. 29), to the battle of Mount Gilboa where Saul was defeated. Now that Saul was defeated, the Philistines would be sure to follow up their advantage by attacks on other sections of the country. And the princes of the Philistines would look with greater distrust upon David. So he was in a difficult situation. Abiathar, the only priest who escaped from the destruction at Nob (1 Sam. 22: 11ff.), was with him, and no doubt the inquiry was made through him whether David should go up to one of the cities of Judah. Abiathar was the keeper of the ephod through which such inquiries were made. (1 Sam. 30: 7, 8.)

Jehovah said unto him, Go up . . . unto Hebron. Hebron was a very ancient city. Moses, wishing to leave that impression, said it was even older than Zoan in Egypt. (Num. 13: 22.) It was a city of some importance when Abraham first entered Canaan. (Gen. 13: 8.) It is located about twenty miles south of Jerusalem, which was in the hands of the Jebusites at the time of our lesson.

David went up thither, and his two wives. With what relief and joyous expectation David must have made this journey. He must have felt that his days and years of waiting for the good pleasure of Jehovah were about ended. Those years had tried him as few men have been tried; and he had stumbled under that trial during the past sixteen months. His wives were Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail of Carmel. Little is known of Ahinoam, except that she came from Jezreel and that she had a masculine name, meaning "brother of grace or beauty." Abigail was from Carmel, but this is not to be confused with Mount Carmel north of Judah; it was south of Jerusalem in the country where David spent much time in his flight from Saul. She was formerly the wife of Nabal. (1 Sam. 25.) She also has a masculine name which means "father of exultation."

And his men that were with him. During his outlaw days David kept about six hundred men with him, but during the last few months at Ziklag men came to him in great numbers. (1 Chron. 12: 1-22.) One group was so large that he feared they had intentions of taking him captive. (Verses 16-18.) The providence of God was working to have all things ready when the time came for him to take over the government. We are told that these men dwelt in the cities of Hebron. Since Hebron was a city itself, we conclude that these cities of Hebron were such smaller towns around as were in its sphere of influence.

They anointed David king over the house of Judah. The meaning of this anointing has caused some difficulty, since Samuel anointed David several years before. Adam Clarke says Samuel's anointing gave him a right to the kingdom, and this anointing gave him authority over the kingdom. That seems to be little more than a play on words. The anointing by Samuel was a private affair, and few people know about it. His brothers who knew about it did not understand it to mean that he was a king. (1 Sam. 17: 28.) So there seemed to be a need for a public acceptance of David as the king, such as would be accepted as a covenant between David and all the people. This anointing made him king of Judah only. Saul's kingdom was still intact, though badly disorganized, and Saul's son, Ishbosheth, was the king, though Abner was the power behind the throne.

II. David Commends Jabesh-Gilead (2 Sam. 2: 4b-7)

Men of Jabesh-gilead . . . buried Saul. The men of the city of Jabesh in Gilead were especially indebted to Saul. Forty years before this Nahash, the king of the Ammonites, had besieged their city and would either destroy them or accept them as his servants after he had punched out one eye of each man. The men of Jabesh asked for seven days' respite to see if they could get help. Saul was told of their plight and raised an army and delivered them. Through all those years they did not forget his kindness, and when he was killed the men of Jabesh-gilead exposed themselves to danger to rescue the

bodies of Jonathan and Saul and give them decent burial.

Blessed be ye of Jehovah. This was David's blessing upon the men of that city for their kindness to Saul. This is further evidence of the great respect David had for Saul in spite of the fact that Saul hated him and did everything he could to kill him. David commended them for remembering a kindness. So many of us will appreciate a deed of kindness at the time it is done for us, but we are prone to forget it all too soon. No doubt many of the men who were involved personally in the danger from the Ammonites had died during the forty years since Saul had delivered them, but so great was their appreciation that they had taught their children to be loyal to Saul and recognize their debt of gratitude for what he had done. This is one of the outstanding examples of gratitude in the Bible.

Jehovah shows lovingkindness and truth unto you. Not only does David commend them for their demonstration of gratitude, but he asks Jehovah to take notice of it and to see that they reap what they have sown, that mercy and truth be their portion in life.

I also will requite you this kindness. To requite means to repay, or recompense one for something done. So David, as king, took cognizance of their deed of kindness and assured them that he would see that they were repaid for this deed of keeping Saul in loving and grateful memory. This is just another link in the chain of evidence that it pays to do right. We might also add that Saul had really forfeited every right he had to claim such a deed of respect from these people. Their deed is not to be taken as evidence that they agreed with Saul in all that he did; they would show their gratitude in spite of his faults and failings.

Let your hands be strong. David was thoroughly sincere in his commendation of the people for remembering Saul's kindness, yet there was a secondary motive in sending the note of commendation. Gilead is a term which includes all the land east of Jordan occupied by the Israelites. The tribes of Gad, Reuben, and half of Manasseh settled there when they first came into Canaan from Egypt. Men who would remember a kindness forty years were men of the

kind David needed and this note was a bid for their good will.

The house of Judah have anointed me king over them. David was careful to let them know that he was king over Judah only, and this implies that he was making no claim to their allegiance. There are at least three things David wished to accomplish by sending this message. (1) They deserved commendation for their deed of kindness, and David would not have been the leader of men he was to withhold that commendation. (2) He wished to reaffirm and demonstrate his love for Jonathan and Saul to the people who loved them most. (3) He wished to gain the good will of the people of Gilead and let them know he held nothing against them because they were loyal to Saul. It was just the kind of message we would expect a man of David's moral and religious stature to send to people of this type.

III. All Israel Accepts David (2 Sam. 5: 1-5)

Then came all the tribes. Saul and three of his sons were slain at same time. (1 Sam. 31: 2.) This was a terrible blow to the organization of his government. It seems that for five years the tribes were unwilling to agree on any one to take the place of Saul. We are told that Abner took Ishbosheth and made him king over all Israel and that he reigned over all Israel two years. (2 Sam. 2: 8-10.) But we knew that it was a period of seven and a half years from the death of Saul to the death of Ishbosheth. We read also that Abner tried to deliver the kingdom of Ishbosheth to David, and in the attempt he said to the elders of Israel, Ishbosheth's subjects, "In times past ye sought for David to be king over you: now then do it." (2 Sam. 3: 17, 18.) This suggests that there was a time after David became king over Judah that the people of the other tribes wished to have David for their king. So we conclude that it took Abner five years to settle Ishbosheth on the throne, so that the record says he reigned two years. The death of Ishbosheth is described in chapter 4; the student should read it and also notice what David did to the men who killed him and brought news of his death to him.

We are thy bone and thy flesh. The men of Israel gave three reasons for accepting David as their king.

Their first reason was that David was their kinsman, a son of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. So long as he was of their bone and flesh it did not matter much about the tribe to which he belonged. Their second reason for accepting him was that during the reign of Saul it was David who led them out to battle and brought them back victorious. They remembered his military ability, and in their weak and disorganized condition they were in need of a man of his stature. Their third reason for accepting him as king was that they knew Jehovah had told David that he was to be both shepherd and prince over Israel. This last reason should have been sufficient for all who respected the will of the Lord. It seems they listed their reasons in an ascending order. The king had to be an Israelite, but not just any Israelite; he must also have the ability to lead them and govern them. But not every Israelite with ability could be king, they wanted the man to whom Jehovah had spoken and had promised the place of shepherd and prince.

Relation to Our Aim

1. Places to remember, (a) Hebron. Abraham made his home in Hebron when he returned from Egypt and referred to it as the oaks of Mamre. (Gen. 13: 18.) It was known as Kiriatharba, and there Sarah died and was buried in a cave near the city. (Gen. 23: Iff.) It was named as a city of refuge when the children of Israel came to Canaan. (Josh. 21: 11.) (b) Jabesh-gilead was east of the Jordan. At one time it was destroyed for not coming to an assembly for the purpose of providing wives for the few remaining Benjamites. (Judges 20 and 21.) But it is remembered best for its remembrance of Saul's kindness by rescuing his body with those of his sons from the Philistines and giving them burial.

2. Persons to remember, (a) Ahinoam, a wife of David, (b) Abigail, a wife of David. David married these women during the time he was being hunted by Saul, (c) Ishbosheth, the son of Saul; he was the youngest and sole survivor after the battle of Mount Gilboa. He was a weak character and was dependent on Abner for his position.

3. Facts to remember, (a) David made no move to take the throne

So all the elders of Israel came. The actual making of the covenant took place between David and the elders, but more than three hundred thousand men came from all over Israel to Hebron to make David their king. (1 Chron. 12: 23-40.) Again we see the elders in the place of authority acting for the people. This was a most memorable occasion for David when thousands of people who had been loyal to Saul turned to him for guidance.

David was thirty years old. According to the chronology we are following, David was thirty years of age in 1048 B.C. and he was anointed by Samuel in 1063 B.C., which would make him fifteen years old at that time.

And he reigned forty years. Seven and one-half years of this time was spent in Hebron and the balance of thirty-three years David spent in Jerusalem, after taking it from the Jebusites. In Hebron he reigned over Judah only, but in Jerusalem he had all the tribes united in one glorious growing kingdom.

without first asking the guidance of Jehovah, leaving even the location of his capital to the wisdom of God. (b) David commended the gratitude and kindness of Jabesh-gilead and at the same time wisely bid for their good will, (c) David conducted himself so wisely that when he was anointed king over all Israel nearly half a million people attended the ceremonies to assure him of their loyalty and to pledge their cooperation.

4. Lessons to remember, (a) Knowing that we are doing the express will of God lends courage and strength which nothing else will. Like David, we should always make it our first business to ascertain what is the will of God before we go into action, (b) It is good to recognize the good in the lives of other people and to commend them for the good they do. David made friends of Jabesh-gilead because he commended them for their kindness to Saul. We should cultivate the good will of people, not merely that we may need a friend sometime, but that we may influence them for good, (c) When we have the authority of God and the backing of the people, there is no excuse for failure or for disinterest. David

had the authority of God in The anointing by Samuel, and he was given the backing of the people when

nearly half a million of his fellows gathered in Hebron to pledge their loyalty.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

What reason is given for the growth of David?

Describe David's growth in the estimation of his people.

By what was David's growth limited?

How did David prepare himself for greater service while herding sheep?

What did David learn during his outlaw period which helped him later in life?

What do the psalms of David reveal to us about his meditations?

Through what means did David grow spiritually?

Introduction

Where did David go seeking safety from Saul?

With what foreign king did David establish a friendship?

How did he make his living among the Philistines?

What of David's faith and character while he lived among the Philistines?

Tell the story of Saul's visit to the woman with a familiar spirit.

Relate the story of Saul's last battle and death.

How was David affected by the death of Jonathan and Saul?

David Anointed in Hebron

How long did David live among the Philistines?

From what experience did the princes of the Philistines save David?

How did David make inquiry of Jehovah?

How old is the city of Hebron and where is it?

In whose hands was Jerusalem at this time?

How many wives did David have with him when he went to Hebron?

What do you know of these wives and of their names?

What do you know of the number of men who went with David?

Why was David anointed the second time?

David Commends Jabesh-gilead

Why were the men of Jabesh-gilead indebted to Saul?

For what act did David commend the people of this city?

What was so outstanding about this act of gratitude?

What did David promise to do personally?

Where was Gilead and who lived there?

What three things did David hope to accomplish by his message to Jabesh-gilead?

All Israel Accepts David

Who became king over Israel in Saul's place while David was king of Judah?

How long did it take this man to gain the throne of Saul?

Who was the leading man who put him on the throne?

What three reasons did Israel give for asking David to be their king?

What promise had God made to David, and what duties did this promise pay upon him?

How old was David at this time and when Samuel anointed him?

How long did David reign in Hebron? How long in Jerusalem?

Relation to Our Aim

What do you know of Hebron?

Why was Jabesh-gilead almost destroyed at one time?

For what is the city best remembered?

What do you know of the character of Ishbosheth?

State and discuss as time permits the three facts to remember.

State and discuss the three lessons to learn.

Lesson X—June 5, 1955

NATHAN REBUKES DAVID

Lesson Text

2 Sam. 12: 1-10, 13

1 And Je-ho'-vah sent Na'-than unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor.

2 The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds;

3 But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own morsel, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.

4 And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him, but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.

5 And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Na'-than, As Je-ho'-vah liveth, the man that hath done this is worthy to die:

6 And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

7 And Na'-than said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el, I anointed thee king over Is'-ra-el, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;

8 And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Is'-ra-el and of Ju'-dah; and if that had been too little, I would have added unto thee such and such things.

9 Wherefore hast thou despised the word of Je-ho'-vah, to do that which is evil in his sight? thou hast smitten

u-ri'-ah the Hit'-tite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Am'-mon.

10 Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thy house, because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of u-ri'-ah the Hit'-tite to be thy wife.

13 And David said unto Na'-than, I have sinned against Je-ho'-vah. And Na'-than said unto David, Je-ho'-vah also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Have mercy upon me, O Jehovah."* (Psalm 31: 9.)
DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—Psalm 51: 1-17.

Daily Bible Readings

- May 30. M.....Nathan Rebukes David (2 Sam. 12: 1-10)
- May 31. T.....David's Confession (Psalm 51: 1-17)
- June 1. W.....David Is Brought to Repentance (2 Sam. 12: 11-15)
- June 2. T.....Death of David's Child (2 Sam. 12: 15-23)
- June 3. F.....The Blessing of Forgiveness (Isa. 55: 6-13)
- June 4. S.....The Joy of Salvation (Isa. 12: 1-6)
- June 5. S.....God's Kindness (Psalm 103: 8-14)

Time.—1034 B.C.

Place.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—David and Nathan.

Golden Text Explained

1. Mercy defined and illustrated.

According to Webster, the word mercy means, "1. Forbearance from inflicting harm, esp. as punishment, under provocation; compassionate treatment of an offender or adversary.

2. Disposition to exercise compassion or forgiveness; willingness to spare." Jesus illustrated mercy by saying that when a man owed a great sum his master forgave him the debt. This servant who had been forgiven went to a fellow-servant who owed him a small sum and had him imprisoned because he could not pay. Then the master said, "Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou besoughtest me: shouldst not thou also have had mercy on thy fellow-servant, even as I had mercy on thee?" (Matt. 18: 32, 33.) The master's mercy was shown in forgiving a debt his servant could not pay. Forbearing to punish by imprisonment, sparing him the suffering he deserved, was an act of mercy. So when God forgives us of our sins he spares us the suffering we deserve as the consequences of those sins; he treats us as if we had never sinned. This treatment is made pos-

sible by the death of Jesus for our sins. God graciously accepts the suffering of Jesus in lieu of our eternal death as the penalty for our sins. This is the grace of God by which we are saved. In this we see the relationship between the grace of God and the mercy of God, both obligating us to love and serve God.

2. All men in need of mercy. All have sinned. (Rom. 3: 23.) The soul that sinneth it shall die. (Ezek. 18: 20.) The wages of sin is death. (Rom. 6: 23.) Therefore, all are doomed to eternal death, except for the mercy and grace of God. For the death which is the penalty for sin is not physical death, but eternal death, the second death in the lake of fire and brimstone. (Rev. 20: 19, 15; 21: 8.) (a) We need mercy on account of our past sins, the sins which we have committed since the day we became accountable to God. If he is not willing to forgive our past, there is no need for us to try to go to heaven, (b) We need mercy on account of our present condition. Our sorrows, our obligations and duties are more than we can bear alone. We are so ignorant and help-

less in our fight against temptations that we will utterly fail if God does not deal with us in much mercy. We need wisdom and strength from above; we need encouragement and consolation which can come only from the "Father of mercies and the God of all comfort." Except for his merciful assistance in these afflictions we would be discouraged and destroyed. (c) We will need his mercy in the day of judgment. Paul prayed that his friend and fellow worker would "find mercy of the Lord in that day." (2 Tim. 1: 18.) And surely none of us can get to heaven without the mercy of the Lord; when we get there, we can all say that we are sinners saved by the mercy and grace of God.

3. **Recipients of God's mercy.** God is willing to show mercy to all men, but does not do so because some refuse to meet the conditions upon which he extends his mercy. (a) Penitent obedience is one condition of enjoying the mercy of God. When

the Jews asked what to do to be saved from their sins, Peter told them to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. (Acts 2: 38.) God was gracious in offering remission to them on such simple and easy terms; his mercy consisted in sparing them the punishment they deserved in consequence of their sins. But those who refuse to render this penitent obedience do not enjoy the forgiveness of their sins, (b) A disposition to show mercy to others is a condition of enjoyment of the mercy of God. Jesus says that, if we do not forgive men who do us wrong, neither will our heavenly Father forgive us our sins against him. (Matt. 6: 14, 15.) The servant who was forgiven the great debt but would not forgive a fellow servant a small debt was delivered to the tormentors until he should pay all that was due. (Matt. 18: 34, 35.) So if we expect God to be merciful to us here or in the judgment, we must learn to deal mercifully with our fellow men.

Introduction

Some connecting links between our lessons are of absorbing interest. First, David took Jerusalem from the Jebusites that he might keep his capital in Judah; to go farther north would have entangled him with the powerful and jealous tribe of Ephraim. As soon as he was settled in Jerusalem, he wished to bring the ark of God to the city. So they went to the house of Abinadab to get it. However they did not carry it as they should; Uzzah put his hand on it to keep it from falling and was struck dead. They left it in the house of Obededom until they learned how to carry it and then carried it to the city. (1 Chron. 15: 1-15.)

When the ark was housed in a tent, David felt ashamed to live in a house of cedar while the Lord dwelt in a tent. So he consulted Nathan, the prophet, about building a house for the Lord. But through Nathan the Lord told David he would not allow him to build the temple because he was a man of war and had shed blood. (1 Chron. 17: 4; 28: 3.) However, God did tell David that his house and kingdom would be made sure and his throne would be established for ever. (2 Sam. 7: 15, 16.) This promise was fulfilled in that Jesus was raised up to sit on

David's throne (Luke 1: 32; Acts 2: 36), and we Gentiles may seek after the Lord since the tabernacle of David has been set up again. (Acts 15: 16-18.)

Next, David's kindness to Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, accidentally made a cripple for life on the day the report of the death of Saul and his sons was received. (2 Sam. 4: 1-4.) David asked if any of the family of Saul was still alive. He was told that Mephibosheth was alive and crippled. He called for him and gave him all the land Saul owned, appointed Ziba with his fifteen sons and twenty servants to cultivate it and bring the fruits to Mephibosheth, and told Mephibosheth to make himself at home in the palace. David never overlooked an opportunity to show his love for Jonathan and Saul.

Then comes that dark chapter in David's life which prepares us for our lesson today. He committed adultery with Bathsheba; he brought Uriah home from the war thinking his stay at home would remove suspicion from him; Uriah refused to go to his house or to his wife, so David sent word to Joab to put Uriah in a place in the battle line where he knew he would be killed; and when Uriah's death was reported, he

married Bathsheba to cover his sin. If a good man would go that length to cover his sin, should we be surprised that many of us are tempted to do

such to cover our sins? It is better to confess our sins and let the blood of Jesus cover them so that even God will not see them again.

Exposition of the Text

I. David Condemns a Sinner (2 Sam.

12: 1-6)

And Jehovah sent Nathan unto David. Nathan seems to have been one of the last of the school of the prophets under Samuel. He stayed with David all through his reign. The first we see of him is in connection with David's desire to build the temple. Nathan at first advised David to proceed, but with word from Jehovah he told David he could not build it on account of his war and bloodshed. He comes into view again at the birth of Solomon (2 Sam. 12: 25), and again at the coronation of Solomon. He showed his courage by aiding Bathsheba to get David to keep his promise to her that her son should have the throne instead of another son of David. (1 Kings 1.) He served David long and faithfully.

There were two men in one city. Whether Nathan knew of an incident like this or simply framed a story to suit his purpose is of no consequence. He paints a picture of a rich and powerful man imposing on and mistreating a poor and defenseless man. This would appeal to David's sense of justice and righteousness. Next he appealed to David's emotion by saying that the poor man had but one little ewe lamb and that it grew up with his children, ate at his table, and slept in his bed. Jews did not have dogs as pets and they were unclean; they often had lambs as pets.

There came a traveller unto the rich man. Hospitality in the east is almost a religion with people. One who refused hospitality to the traveler was counted a very worthless character. Nabal was called a worthless man for such an act. (1 Sam. 25.) Nathan pictured the rich man as being a worthless character as to refuse to kill a lamb from his own flock to show hospitality to the traveler. Then he went a step further and pictured the rich man as being so overbearing and ruthless that he took this only lamb, a family pet, killed it, and served it to his guest. Nathan wished to see how David would respond to three things, (a) What did David think of fair deal-

ing between men? Did he still think that men should treat each other right? (b) What did David think of a man's right to keep and cherish that which was his? Did he have any respect for the ties of love and devotion in the other fellow? (c) Did David have any sense of justice? What did he think of the rich and powerful mistreating the poor and defenseless? His story was framed perfectly to bring David out to express himself on these matters.

David's anger was greatly kindled. Sins look bigger and blacker in the other man. David was guilty of things far worse than the man in Nathan's story, but there were so many extenuating circumstances that David had been able to throttle his conscience enough to keep back a confession of his sin.

The man . . . is worthy to die. There was no law against sheep stealing that carried the death penalty, so David could not actually condemn the man to death. But his crime was so deliberate, so uncalled for, and so violated David's sense of justice and respect for the rights and emotions of others that he counted the man worthy of death. This is the way Nathan honed David would respond. If David had heard the story and had not been impressed with the unrighteousness of the man's deed, Nathan would have been disappointed, and likely would have thought not best to openly accuse David of his sin.

He shall restore the lamb fourfold. This restitution was according to the law of Moses. (Ex. 22: 1.) Not everything had to be restored fourfold, but where there was a possibility of making restitution, it was required in some measure. If an ox was stolen, it was to be restored fivefold. If that which was stolen was found in one's possession, it was restored twofold. Restitution is the fruit of repentance. Where there is no restitution, where restitution is possible, there is no repentance. People who steal, lie, and peddle slander all over the community for years and then decide to get right with God have a lot of restitution to make in restoring stolen property where pos-

sible and in correcting injuries done those whom they have slandered.

Because he had no pity. David thought pity and compassion for the weak and poor would have prevented the rich man's taking the little ewe lamb. Undoubtedly his conscience had been lashing him for showing no pity to Uriah. The fact that he felt as he did about these matters was evidence to Nathan that David was ripe for a confession of his sin and a turning from it.

II. Nathan Identifies the Sinner (2

Sam. 12: 7-10)

Thou art the man. Nathan exhibited a lot of courage in uttering these words. Kings had the power of life and death in their hands without the necessity of answering to any man or court. Will David have his bodyguard fall upon Nathan and put him out of the way for presumption and insubordination? or will he acknowledge his sin and be grateful to Nathan for bringing him to repentance and saving his soul? Some preachers are given their notice that their services are no longer needed because they insist on exposing sin in the congregation, and occasionally in high places. David would stoop to adultery and then to murder to cover up his first sin, but he would not fire the preacher who told him of his sin and urged him to repent.

Thus saith Jehovah. The Lord reminded David of four things he had done for him. (a) He had anointed him. Undoubtedly Jehovah could have used other boys and guided them into men fit to be king, so David was under obligation to God for this honor, (b) God had delivered David out of the hand of Saul. This is proof of the provident care which God exercised over David during that long struggle which we took for granted in lessons past. (c) Jehovah had given David Saul's house and wives. Saul had only one wife and one concubine. (1 Sam. 14: 50; 2 Sam. 3:

7.) But the former king's harem and all that pertained to his house fell to the incoming king, (d) Jehovah had given David the house of Judah and of Israel, a united kingdom. He then adds that, if all this had been too little, he would have given him more for only the asking.

Thou despise the word of Jehovah. People should be made to realize that they *despise* the word of Jehovah when they choose to disregard it and

live as they please. Some people would feel a sense of shock, they would count it an insult, if they were told that they despised the word of Jehovah, and in doing so they despised Jehovah himself. But all who disregard the word of the Lord and do as they please, actually despise the Lord and his holy word. Let the good (?) moral men take heed. And let religious people who refuse to do some things the Lord commands because they do not think them essential—let them take heed lest they be found despisers of the Lord and his word.

Thou hast smitten Uriah. Nathan charged David with the murder of Uriah even though he had used the sword of the Ammonites as the instrument of his death. God does not judge by outward appearances; he pulls back the cover and turns the light into the innermost secret caverns of the heart to reveal the lusts, passions, and ugly motives which prompt our deeds.

Hast taken his wife to be thy wife. The rich man took only a little ewe lamb from a man and his children and you think he is worthy of death; of how much sorer death is one worthy who will take a man's life from him and then take his wife to cover up the sin which caused him to murder the man? Some have wondered why David was allowed to keep Uriah's wife. We should remember that God allowed polygamy in that age, and, since Uriah was dead, Bathsheba was free to marry. They were not under such strict laws concerning marriage as we live under today. (Matt. 19: 1-9.)

The sword shall never depart from thy house. It is difficult for us to determine whether God moves to bring such calamities upon people as punishment for their sins or whether God foretells the natural consequences of these sins. God said the sword would never depart from David's house. Did God move men to use the sword in David's house for the purpose of punishing David? or did these deaths occur in David's family as a result of following the bad example set by David in his sin? The writer prefers the latter position. If David had never committed this great sin, these tragedies would never have happened because there would never have been the lust and discord which caused them. It is interesting to note that David said the

rich man who took the lamb should restore fourfold and that four deaths came to David's house to remind him of his sin in taking the life of Uriah, (a) The child born to him and Bathsheba died. (Verse 18.) (b) David's son Ammon was killed by Absalom for humbling Tamar, his half-sister. (2 Sam. 13.) (c) Absalom died in rebellion against David. (2 Sam. 18:15.) (d) David's fourth son, Adonijah, was killed by Solomon soon after Solomon came to the throne. (1 Kings 2: 25.)

Because thou hast despised me. In verse 9 David was accused of despising God's word, and here for the same sins he is accused of despising God. There is no way of despising God's word without despising God himself. And when one disobeys his word, he despises both God and his word.

III. David Confesses His Sin (2 Sam. 12: 13)

I have sinned against Jehovah. Saul had confessed his sin with little meaning and went right on to do wrong again. But David confessed his sin to get a burden off his conscience and to renew his fellowship with the Lord. These two remind us somewhat of Judas and Peter in their reactions to their sins against Jesus. David emphasized the fact that his sin was against Jehovah. Later he said, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned." (Psalm 51: 4.) "It was a sin, as all other sins are, primarily and mainly against God; it derived its chief enormity from that fact. We are

not to suppose that David did not believe and notice that he had done wrong to men or that he had offended against human laws and against the well-being of society. His crime against Uriah and his family was of the deepest and most aggravated character, but still the offense derived its chief heinousness from the fact that it was a violation of the law of God." (Barnes.) And with this thought agrees our statement that one cannot disobey God's law without despising God himself.

Jehovah also hath put away thy sin. The penalty for adultery under the law was death, so David was exposed to death, was worthy of death. But Nathan assured him that he was to be spared, the penalty would not be exacted. This, of course, includes the forgiveness of his sin. Adam Clarke takes a peculiar turn on these words and says they should be "pass over" instead of "put away." He then concludes that Nathan meant that some must suffer death as the penalty for the sin, but the suffering of the penalty had been transferred, "passed over," from David to the child born of Bathsheba. And a lot of religious teachers have followed him to teach that God inflicts disease and death upon innocent children to punish parents for their sin or to cause them to turn to God. When God put away his sin, he relaxed the penalty, and because of his deep penitence and contrition he was forgiven. Psalm 51 was written on this occasion and should be studied in connection with this lesson.

Relation to Our Aim

1. Persons to remember, (a) Nathan. He is known for his courage in exposing sin and his faithfulness and loyalty to God in the performance of his duty. He wrote the biographies of David and Solomon (1 Chron. 29; 2 Chron. 9: 29), which would surely make interesting reading for Bible students had they been preserved. (b) Uriah, the Hittite. He was one of thirty commanders over the thirty divisions of David's army. (1 Chron. 11: 41.) (c) Bathsheba. She was the wife of Uriah and the granddaughter of Ahithophel, one time a counselor and trusted friend of David. When Absalom rebelled, Ahithophel turned against David and assisted Absalom, which may have been caused by his re-

sentment for David's sin against his granddaughter.

2. Facts to remember, (a) Nathan rebuked David, thus setting a fine example for gospel preachers to rebuke sin in high places as well as in low. When preachers and elders reach the place where they are afraid to expose and rebuke sin, the church will cease to deserve the respect of people and will cease to enjoy the communion of God. (b) Nathan's rebuke was plain and pointed, yet dignified. One does not have to throw away refinement and culture to be loyal and effective in exposing and rebuking sin. (c) David did not allow wealth, position, or popularity to keep him from making a full confession of his sin. He even composed

a song and published it. We should be ashamed of our sins, but we should not be ashamed to confess our sins.

3. Lessons to remember, (a) Since sin begins in the heart (James 1: 14), we may be sure David had been thinking things unholy for some time. We should avoid unholy thoughts with the same care that we avoid poisoned food, (b) We should learn the lesson of appreciating peo-

ple who make us realize our sins and try to get us to turn from them; they are our best friends, (c) If David had been able to keep his sin covered until he meets God in the judgment, he would be lost, for no adulterer can go to heaven. It is better to be embarrassed by confessing our sins now than to hide them until the judgment and confess them there when it is too late to get forgiveness.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

What is the meaning of the word mercy?

How did Jesus illustrate mercy?

How are the grace and mercy of God related?

Who are in need of mercy and why?

Discuss our need of mercy with reference to our past, present, and future.

Can you show that penitent obedience is a condition of our receiving mercy?

Give and discuss a second condition of our enjoyment of the mercy of God.

Introduction

Why was David wise in selecting Jerusalem as his capital city?

Can you relate his experience in moving the ark to Jerusalem?

Why was David not allowed to build the temple?

What did God promise David that reaches down to us in the church?

Can you tell of David's kindness to the family of Saul?

Can you tell the story of David, Bathsheba, and Uriah?

David Condemns a Sinner

What position did Nathan hold under David?

How did Nathan appeal to David's sense of justice?

How did he appeal to David's emotions?

How important was hospitality to the people of David's time?

To what three things did Nathan wish to see how David would respond?

How did David's sin look when he saw it in the other man?

Discuss the law of restitution then and now.

What essential characteristic did David say was lacking in the rich man?

Nathan Identifies the Sinner

Why did Nathan need courage to accuse David of his sin?

Do preachers and elders expose and rebuke sin too much, not enough, or just right?

Of what four things did God remind David he had done for him?

When do people despise the word of God?

Why is despising the word of God so sinful?

Why should the good (?) man especially take heed to this warning?

Did the Lord hold David guilty of murder? How did God say David would suffer for his sin?

David Confesses His Sin

Compare David's confession with Saul's confession.

How could David say he had sinned against God only?

What is meant by saying God had put away his sin?

What false theory is taught by some and based on a misunderstanding of this scripture?

Relation to Our Aim

What do you know of Nathan's faithfulness and his writings?

What do you know of Uriah as to nationality and position?

What do you know of Bathsheba?

Who was her grandfather?

State and discuss as time permits three facts to remember.

State and discuss as time permits three lessons to learn.

Lesson XI—June 12, 1955

DAVID'S CHARGE TO SOLOMON

Lesson Text

1 Chron. 28: 1-10

1 And David assembled all the princes of Is'-ra-el, the princes of the tribes, and the captains of the companies that served the king by course, and the captains of thousands, and the captains of hundreds, and the rulers over all the substance and possessions of the king and of his sons, with the officers, and the mighty men, even all the mighty men

of valor, unto Je-ru'-sa-lem.

2 Then David the king stood up upon his feet, and said, Hear me, my brethren, and my people: as for me, it was in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of Je-ho'-vah, and for the footstool of our God: and I had made ready for the building.

3 But God said unto me, Thou

shalt not build a house for my name, because thou art a man of war, and hast shed blood.

4 Howbeit Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el, chose me out of all the house of my father to be king over Is'-ra-el for ever: for he hath chosen Ju'-dah to be prince; and in the house of Ju'-dah, the house of my father; and among the sons of my father he took pleasure in me to make me king over all Is'-ra-el;

5 And of all my sons (for Je-ho'-vah hath given me many sons), he hath chosen Sol'-o-mon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of Je-ho'-vah over Is'-ra-el.

6 And he said unto me, Sol'-o-mon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts; for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father.

7 And I will establish his kingdom for ever, if he be constant to do my

commandments and mine ordinances, as at this day.

8 Now therefore, in the sight of all is'-ra-el, the assembly of Je-ho'-vah, and in the audience of our God, observe and seek out all the commandments of Je-ho'-vah your God; that ye may possess this good land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children after you for ever.

9 And thou, Sol'-o-mon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; for Je-ho'-vah searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.

10 Take heed now; for Je-ho'-vah hath chosen thee to build a house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge."* (PROV. 1: 7.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 45: 1-7.

Daily Bible Readings

June 6. M.....	Pattern of the Temple (1 Chron. 28: 11-21)
June 7. T.....	David's Prayer for the Temple (1 Chron. 29: 10-22)
June 8. W.....	Death of David (1 Chron. 29: 28-30)
June 9. T.....	Reign of Solomon (2 Chron. 1: 7-12)
June 10. F.....	The Wealth of Solomon (2 Chron. 1: 14-17)
June 11. S.....	Remembering God in Youth (Eccles. 12: 1-10)
June 12. S.....	Solomon's Glory (Matt. 6: 25-34)

TIME.—1015 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—David, Solomon, and prominent men of Israel.

Golden Text Explained

1. **The fear of Jehovah.** The word fear in our text means reverence or holy fear, not that feeling which is described as dread, terror, fright, and alarm. For a fuller discussion of the meaning of the word see the golden text in Lesson III. Solomon has much to say about fearing Jehovah and of the value of such an attitude. He tells us that the fear of Jehovah prolongs our days. (Prov. 10: 27.) Again he teaches much the same lesson in these words, "The fear of Jehovah is a fountain of life, that one may depart from the snares of death." (Prov. 14: 27.) These passages promise long physical life to those who fear Jehovah. Of course, we are not to conclude that all who fear him will live their fourscore and ten years regardless of all other conditions. Rather we are to learn from this that the fear of Jehovah contri-

butes to long life. This is true because a fear of God will lead one to live a quiet life, to refrain from dissipation and overindulgence in those things which tend to shorten life. But it is also true that the fear of Jehovah is a fountain of spiritual life, since fear is a condition of being acceptable to God. (Acts 10: 34, 35.) Hence, we should learn what it is to fear God, and we should do all we can to cultivate a healthy feeling of fear in our hearts.

2. **The beginning: of knowledge.** The word *knowledge* here is used in the sense of wisdom. In another place Solomon says, "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom." (Prov. 9: 10.) But our emphasis just now is upon the word *beginning*. Fear is the *beginning* of knowledge, wisdom. In the margin we have *chief part* instead of beginning. But our

translators preferred the word *beginning*, for in Prov. 9: 10 quoted above, another Hebrew word is used which does not admit of the idea of *chief part*. So it is safe to say that the idea in this verse is that the fear of Jehovah is the beginning in the sense of the starting point. One cannot possess real wisdom without a fear of Jehovah. It matters not how well educated one may be in the arts and sciences, if he does not fear God, he is most unwise, lacking in wisdom. The atheist says there is no God, and David calls him a fool. (Psalm 14: 1.) He may have a long string of letters attached to his name indicating his intellectual attainments, but if he does not believe in the existence of God, he cannot fear God and so is a fool, or foolish person. So the fear of God is the starting point, the foundation, on which we build all true knowledge and wisdom. That which is not built on the fear of Jehovah is worthless or hurtful.

3. **How this wisdom shows itself,** (a) Solomon tells us that "a wise man feareth, and departeth from evil." (Prov. 14: 16.) Again, "Be not wise in thine own eyes; Fear Jehovah, and depart from evil." (Prov. 3: 7.) Again, "And by the fear of

Jehovah men depart from evil." (Prov. 16: 6b.) From this verse we learn that it is by the fear of Jehovah that men are caused to depart from evil. This should impress us with the value of fear, (b) And we learn that "the fear of Jehovah is to hate evil." (Prov. 8: 13.) This is the reason the fear of Jehovah causes us to depart from evil. We find it easy to depart from that which we hate. If we can learn to hate all evil, we will find it easy to depart from it and to do right. But the way to hate evil is to cultivate a genuine fear of Jehovah. It is for this reason that David said, "The fear of Jehovah is clean." (Psalm 19: 9.) And (c) The fear of Jehovah leads us to do right from the heart. That is the reason why fear and obedience are so often coupled together. Samuel said, "Fear Jehovah, and serve him in truth with all your heart." (1 Sam. 12: 24.) Solomon said, "Fear God, and keep his commandments." (Eccles. 12: 13.) Peter said to fear God and work righteousness. (Acts 10: 35.) Paul said the Romans had obeyed the teaching from the heart. (Rom. 6: 17.) Those who truly fear God will obey God, and their obedience will spring from the heart, for that is where the fear resides.

Introduction

When David was old and was not expected to live but a short while longer, Bathsheba became deeply concerned about which of David's sons would become king in his stead. She knew that David had promised her that her son Solomon should become the next king (1 Kings 1: 17), but Nathan had just brought her word that another son was making plans to take the throne before the death of David. Adonijah, the son of Haggith by David, the half-brother of Solomon, had secured the co-operation of Joab, the head of the army, and Abiathar, a priest, and was already slaying the sheep and oxen for the feast. He had invited as many of the king's sons as he thought would be favorable to him and had sent invitations to as many of the mighty men of Judah as he thought would help him. So we may conclude that Bathsheba had no time to spare if she wished to keep the throne for her son. She went hurriedly into David's quarters and told him that Adonijah was in the act of

usurping the throne without his knowledge, and that he must act quickly to save the throne for Solomon. While she was talking to David, Nathan the prophet came into the room and confirmed all that Bathsheba had told him. In spite of his illness and consequent weakness, David rose to the demands of the occasion and called for Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the captain of his bodyguard to take Solomon on the king's mule and anoint him in the valley of Gihon near the city. Adonijah had a priest and the head of the army on his side, and that was strong backing. But David was able to get the backing of a priest and the head of the capital police, which was a strong military force in Jerusalem, and a prophet. So far as we know, Adonijah had no prophet with him. Thinking that his plans were unknown to David and Solomon, Adonijah was taking enough time to make his anointing a big affair. But knowing they had no

time to waste, David and Solomon did not take time to prepare a feast or celebration of any kind. They simply went to Gihon, and Zadok poured the anointing oil on Solomon, trumpets were blown, and the people with them shouted, "Long live king Solomon." There were enough people to raise a shout that could be heard by Adonijah and his friends

at Enrogel, not too far away. This shout put an end to the feasting in Adonijah's camp, and every man went his way. Adonijah went to the temple and took hold of the horns of the altar, asking that Solomon swear that he would not kill him. He was spared at this time, but for a rash act soon thereafter he lost his life at the hands of Solomon.

Exposition of the Text

I. The Assembly in Jerusalem (1

Chron. 28: 1)

David assembled all the princes of Israel. This was an unusual gathering. The anointing of Solomon in Gihon was done so hurriedly that there was no time for ceremony, but this time all the great men of the nation were assembled and speech making, feasting, and coronation were in order. "A great convocation was held, attended by the princes of the leading officers of the army, the chief men of the royal estates, of the Crethi and Plethi, and of the Gibborim.

. . . The occasion of the great gathering of the heads of the nation seems to have used for a second and more public consecration of Solomon as king. The grand benediction ended, David called on those present to 'bless the Lord their God; and all the congregation blessed Jehovah, the God of their fathers, and bowed their heads and did reverence to God and the king.' Great sacrifices followed, and then a general coronation feast, at which the whole assembly, as representing the nation, hailed Solomon as the king of their choice, and he was anointed before them a second time. The liberties of Israel had been left undisturbed by the great hero-king, and its vote was still needed to make the succession legitimate and unquestionable." (Geikie.)

The captains of the companies. From 1 Chron. 27: 1 we learn who these captains were. Of them Clarke says, "Twenty-four persons, chosen out of David's worthies, each of whom had a second, were placed over teeny-four thousand men, who all served a month in turn at a time; and this was the whole of their service during the year, after which they attended to their own affairs. Thus the king had always on foot a regular force of twenty-four thousand, who served without expense to him or the state, and were not oppressed by the service, which took up only

a twelfth part of their time; and by this plan he could at any time, when the exigency of the state required it, bring into the field twelve times twenty-four thousand, or two hundred and eighty-eight thousand fighting men, independently of the twelve thousand officers, which made in the whole an effective force of three hundred thousand soldiers."

Rulers over all the substance. These were the men who had charge of superintending the affairs of the government holdings in fields, vineyards, olive orchards, cattle, and all other matters of substance. (1 Chron. 27: 25-31.)

Mighty men of valor. There seems to be a distinction here between the "mighty men" and the "mighty men of valor." And in 1 Chron. 11: 10-25 we have the names of the "mighty men" given, and along with their names there is recited some deed by which they were distinguished. Then in 1 Chron. 11: 26-47 we have the names of the "mighty men of armies," which we suppose is the same as the "mighty men of valor" in our text. These several divisions of men of renown in the kingdom, with all the people who would come to such an event as the coronation of a king, must have furnished one of the greatest gatherings in the history of the nation thus far. And no doubt the pomp and ceremony of this occasion was second to nothing the nation had witnessed thus far.

II. David Addresses the People (1

Chron. 28: 2-8)

It was in my heart to build a house. David called the people gathered in Jerusalem, "my brethren, and my people." Being king had not separated him from the people so far that he no longer felt they were his brethren, nor had his age robbed him of the realization that they were still his people. He reminded them that he had planned to build a house for

the ark of the covenant of Jehovah. He speaks of it as a house for the ark of the covenant because it was there that Jehovah made his presence known and where he promised to commune with his people. (Ex. 25: 22.) David not only intended to build a house, but he had asked for the counsel of Nathan the prophet, and Nathan told him to proceed with his plans. (1 Chron. 17: 2.) Nathan seems to have spoken without consulting the Lord, and the following night God gave him a message counteracting his counsel.

For the footstool of our God. It is possible that this expression is used to indicate David's humility. He felt he was worthy only to build a place for the feet of the Lord. He was not worthy to build a throne, but hoped the Lord would allow him to build a footstool. He spoke of worshiping at the footstool of the Lord. (Psalm 132: 7.)

I had made ready for the building. Whether this refers to preparations made before David learned that he would not be allowed to build the house or whether it refers to all the preparation he made is difficult to say. The latter supposition is preferable, and a record of his preparations may be found in 1 Chron. 22: 2-5, 14-19. His preparation for the house left little to Solomon but to assemble what David prepared.

Thou shalt not build a house for my name. This is the message which God gave Nathan counteracting his encouragement to David to proceed with his plans to build a house. The reason given for not allowing David to build the house was that he had shed too much blood, being a man of war. However, at this time he was told that his son would be allowed to build the house. It was then that he went to work gathering material for it.

Jehovah, the God of Israel, chose me. David then turns back in his mind to the time when Jehovah chose him from among his brothers to be king over Israel. Samuel went to Bethlehem and thought surely the anointed of the Lord was before him each time a fine-looking young man came before him from among the sons of Jesse. But none of those at the house pleased the Lord, so they sent to the pasture for the shepherd lad, and Jehovah instructed Samuel to anoint him. (1 Sam. 16: 6-13.)

He hath chosen Judah to be prince.

David was of the tribe of Judah, from which tribe God had said the kings were to come. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be." (Gen. 49: 10.) David never ceased to give praise to God that his tribe, his father's house, and himself were chosen to rule the people. It was this great yet simple humility in David that helped to make him a man after God's own heart.

He hath chosen Solomon my son. We know neither when nor how God made known this choice to David. We know that David swore to Bathsheba some time before his death that Solomon would succeed him as king. (1 Kings 1: 29, 30.) But when God made known to David his choice of Solomon instead of one of his many other sons we do not know. The names of six sons born while he lived in Hebron and thirteen born while he lived in Jerusalem are given, besides the names of the sons born to his concubines which are not given. (1 Cor. 3: 1-9.) So Solomon was chosen above at least twelve others.

To sit upon the throne of the kingdom of Jehovah. This is the only occurrence of this expression in the Bible—"throne of the kingdom of Jehovah." This emphasizes the fact that the kingdom still belongs to Jehovah and that the throne in that kingdom belongs to Jehovah. The man who occupies that throne is there by permission of God and is obligated to honor God and seek to do his pleasure. Solomon would have done better if he had remembered that this throne he occupied belonged to Jehovah.

I have chosen him to be my son. Here again reference is made to the fact that God expressed his choice of Solomon to take the place of David, but again no intimation as to the time the choice was made known. However, the connection seems to imply that it may have been made after David was told he could not build the house of God.

If he be constant to do my commandments. This is the condition on which Jehovah promised to establish Solomon's kingdom forever. This same condition of God's blessing was repeated to Solomon in his experiences at Gibeon shortly after he took over the reigns of government. It should be noticed that the statement

implies that Solomon was walking in the ordinances of Jehovah in a manner well-pleasing to God at the time this promise was made.

Observe and seek out all the commandments. This is David's parting advice to the great assembly on the day of the coronation of Solomon. The terms of the statement are in reverse order, since we are first to seek the commandments and then to observe them. Some feel an obligation to observe the commandments which they happen to know, but too many do not feel that they are obligated to *seek out*, to learn, commandments that they may observe them.

That ye may possess this good land. Israel entered Canaan knowing that their possession of the land was conditioned upon their continued obedience to God. (Deut. 30: 15-20.) Here they are reminded of the fact that their possession of the good land depended on their obedience to God. They disobeyed and lost the land for a time.

III. David's Charge to Solomon (1 Chron. 28: 9, 10)

Know thou the God of thy father. The word *know* in this statement means more than merely calling attention to God. Solomon is called upon to acquaint himself with God. To do this he must know the mind of God, the will of God, the ways of God. The term "of my father" is evidently intended to give the statement an emotional value. Solomon was to serve the God whom his father had tested and found to be the true God, a present help in time of need.

Serve him with a perfect heart. From this we are reminded that acceptable service comes from the heart. A perfect heart is one which is unreservedly given to God. A perfect heart does not mean sinless perfection, but it does mean complete surrender.

Jehovah searcheth all hearts. This necessitates omnipresence, for God must be where the heart is which he searches. It implies omniscience, for nothing short of that can read the

secrets hidden in the deepest recesses of the heart. Solomon says that only Jehovah can know the hearts of all men. (1 Kings 8: 39.) Not only does God search, but David says he understands all the imaginations of the thoughts of the heart. This is a sobering thought. God knows what I think, imagine, feel, desire, purpose, though I never express these feelings or put them into action. And these feelings, desires, and purposes are what I am in the sight of God. What a pity Solomon did not profit by the counsel of a loving father!

If thou seek him. Jesus said "seek and ye shall find," but it was not new, for David had said the same thing a thousand years earlier. It has always been true that God is found of those who seek him in his appointed way. And it has always been true that, if people forsake God, he will cast them off. This certainly does not sound like the doctrine of "once in grace always in grace." The children of Israel found this to be true when God forsook them and allowed the Assyrians and the Babylonians to carry them away into captivity. But his love followed them even in captivity, and when they learned their lesson and sought God again he was near them. (Jer. 29: 12-14.)

Be strong, and do it. David closed his charge to Solomon by reminding him that God had chosen him to build a house for the sanctuary, or place for worship of Jehovah. His parting admonition was to be strong in the doing of that which Jehovah had chosen him to do. There would be enemies, hindrances, temptations to turn to other things and he would need strength of will and purpose to do that which he was expected to do. All of us need to realize that strength is needed to do all God expects of us. Many people go through life without doing anything which requires any special exhibition of strength, but it is not because they can do all God requires without strength; it is because they are simply not doing all God expects of them.

Relation to Our Aim

1. Facts to remember, (a) Solomon was God's choice to follow David on the throne. It was not a matter of allowing Bathsheba to influence him to choose her son in preference to some of the rest, (b) Nathan counseled David to build the house, but

God told him not to build it. Good men go wrong when they fail to take time to learn what the will of the Lord is. How much more do we need to depend on revelation for the will of God. (c) Solomon was anointed the second time. (1 Chron. 29: 22.)

His first anointing was to save the throne for him; the second time was to allow the people to have a voice in the choice, at least to confirm the choice.

2. Lessons to remember, (a) The fact that it is in one's heart to do something for God does not mean that God will be pleased for one to do it. David had it in his heart to build the temple, but God would not allow him to do it. Man often has desires in his heart to do things contrary to the will of the Lord, (b) The establishment of Solomon's

throne was made to depend upon Solomon's constancy in obedience to Jehovah. All of us stand upon the same condition. If we are faithful, we will be established in the love of God; if we are unfaithful, we will be forsaken by the Lord and punished, (c) We should learn that God searches our hearts every moment of the day and night. We can never have a thought, not even the slightest imagination, that is hidden from God. Hence, we should live at all times like we would live if the Lord were here in visible form walking or sitting by our side.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

What is the meaning of the word fear in our text?

What does Solomon say the fear of Jehovah will do for us?

How does the fear of Jehovah lengthen one's life?

What does the word *beginning* on our text mean?

Why is an educated atheist a fool? And why is the uneducated Christian a wise man?

What is the connection between fearing God and departing from evil?

How may one learn to hate evil?

What is the connection between fearing God and obeying God?

Introduction

What promises did David make Bathsheba concerning her son Solomon?

What son of David tried to take the throne before Solomon got it?

What prominent men assisted Adonijah in his attempt to get the throne?

What great man assisted Bathsheba to put Solomon on the throne?

What happened in Adonijah's camp when they heard the shouting of Solomon's people?

Where did Adonijah go? and what happened to him?

The Assembly in Jerusalem

Describe briefly the service of coronation for Solomon.

What do you know of the army under the "captains of the companies" of our lesson?

What is meant by the rulers over the substance?

Who were the mighty men of valor mentioned in our text?

David Addresses the People

What expression in our text shows David's close connection with his people?

Why was the temple called a house for the ark of the covenant of Jehovah?

What was Nathan's first counsel to David about building the temple?

What expression in our text shows David's deep humility?

What preparations did David make for the building of the temple?

Why was David not allowed to build the house for God?

What did David mean by saying Judah was chosen to be prince?

Do you know when God made known to David his choice of Solomon to take his place?

What do you know of the size of David's family?

With what expression did David emphasize the fact that the kingdom still belonged to God?

On what condition did God promise to establish Solomon's throne?

What is meant by observing and seeking out the commandments of God?

What connection was there between their obedience and possessing the land?

David's Charge to Solomon

What did David mean in charging Solomon to know God?

Why speak of Jehovah as "the God of thy father"?

What is meant by a perfect heart?

What attributes of God are implied in the statement that he searches all hearts?

What determines our character before God?

What lesson did David teach Solomon that Jesus later taught?

What does our lesson teach about God casting people off?

Why would Solomon need to be strong?

Name and discuss three facts to remember.

State and discuss three lessons to remember.

Lesson XII—June 19, 1955

SOLOMON CHOOSES WISDOM

Lesson Text

1 Kings 3: 4-15

4 And the king went to Gib'e-on to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place: a thousand burnt-offerings did Sol'o-mon offer upon that altar.

5 In Gib'e-on Je-ho'-vah appeared to Sol'o-mon in a dream by night; and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.

6 And Sol'o-mon said, Thou hast showed unto thy servant David my father great lovingkindness, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great lovingkindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.

7 And now, O Je-ho'-vah my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child; I know not how to go out or come in.

8 And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude.

9 Give thy servant therefore an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and evil; for who is able to judge this thy great people?

10 And the speech pleased the Lord, that Sol'o-mon had asked this thing.

11 And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life, neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies, but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern justice;

12 Behold, I have done according to thy word: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there hath been none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.

13 And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honor, so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee, all thy days.

14 And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days.

15 And Sol'o-mon awoke; and, behold, it was a dream: and he came to Je-ru'-sa-lem, and stood before the ark of the covenant of Je-ho'-vah, and offered up burnt-offerings, and offered peace-offerings, and made a feast to all his servants.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding” (Prov. 3: 13.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—PROV. 8: 12-19.

Daily Bible Readings

- June 13. M.....Solomon’s Wise Choice (2 Chron. 1: 7-13)
- June 14. T.....David’s Dying Instructions (1 Kings 2: 1-4)
- June 15. W.....Example of Solomon’s Wisdom (1 Kings 3: 16-28)
- June 16. T.....Visit of Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10: 1-13)
- June 17. F.....Dedication of the Temple (1 Kings 8: 54-65)
- June 18. S.....Love for God’s House (Psalm 122: 1-9)
- June 19. S.....Solomon’s Wisdom (1 Kings 4: 29-34)

TIME.—1014 B.C.

PLACE.—Gibeon.

PERSONS.—Solomon and Jehovah.

Golden Text Explained

1. Source of wisdom and knowledge. First, let us learn what is true wisdom and understanding, and then we may be prepared to find their source. “The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowl-

edge of the Holy One is understanding.” (Prov. 9: 10.) No one is wise who does not reverence Jehovah and respect his authority; and no one is a person of understanding who does not know about Jehovah. Job

raised the question. "But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?" (Job 28:

12.) He then says man knows not the price thereof, nor is it in the land of the living. By this he simply means to say that wisdom and understanding have a higher source than man; they do not originate with man. Man can learn everything the great universities can teach him which originated with man, and he will not know how to live in peace with his fellow man, in peace with his God, or how to be happy in the next world. Man can spend his life studying mathematics, science, philosophy, and art, and at the close he will not have found one morsel of food for his soul except that which these branches of learning have taken from the Bible. Job continues, "God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof." (28: 23.) And then he concludes with this, "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom: and to depart from evil is understanding." (28: 28.) Hence, the source of wisdom and understanding is in God. He has revealed these things to us in his word. The person who does not study the Bible, the word of God, is void of wisdom and understanding. One may be highly educated without a knowledge of God and his word; but one cannot be wise and understanding who does not know God through his word.

2. Why is such a person happy?

(a) Solomon says wisdom and understanding are better than **silver**, gold, and rubies. (Prov. 3: 14-16.) Material wealth is so essential to our physical welfare in this life that it is difficult for us to live as if we believe this statement. If we believe it, we will spend more time and be more interested in gaining wisdom and understanding than we will in gaining wealth, (b) That person who has wisdom is happy because,

"Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." (Prov. 3: 17.) Neither wealth nor health can be counted on to bring pleasure and peace without fail, but Solomon says wisdom will do so. (c) That one who has wisdom and understanding has life and favor. "For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favor of Jehovah. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: All they that hate me love death." (Prov. 8: 35, 36.) Wisdom and understanding lead to life, they are conditions of the highest life here and of eternal life hereafter. And because they are conditions of life, that individual who hates them acts as if he loves death, for hating wisdom and understanding lead one to death, (d) The one who has wisdom is happy because he possesses an attribute of God. The reader should study Prov. 8: 22-31. Some think that wisdom in this passage refers to the Son of God, but if so, it is only because he is a living manifestation of all those qualities wisdom is said to have. The one who is like Jesus has wisdom. To the extent that one has wisdom and understanding he is like God. Being like God leads to true happiness and peace here and hereafter.

3. Walking: worthily of the Lord.

Paul prayed that the church might be filled with wisdom and spiritual understanding that they might walk worthily of the Lord. (Col. 1: 9, 10.) And this worthy walk is described as (a) doing the things that please the Lord; (b) bearing fruit in every good work; and (c) increasing in the knowledge of God. No one can walk worthily of the Lord without wisdom and understanding; no one can be saved who does not walk worthily; therefore, no one can be saved who does not have wisdom and understanding. No wonder Solomon said the man who possesses these qualities is the happy man.

Introduction

The common practice of liquidating aspirants to the throne in order to make his crown secure appeared to Solomon to be a necessity. His father had counseled him to do so. (1 Kings 2.) His half-brother, Adonijah, was the first to go. Adonijah had a coronation party (1 Kings 1), but did not make a success of it. When he heard that Solomon was placed on the

throne by David, he went to the altar and refused to move until he was assured that he would not be hurt. Solomon promised that he might live if he behaved himself. He confided to Bathsheba that the only thing his father left which he desired was his young wife, Abishag. But Solomon construed this as an act which meant treason, and he had Adonijah slain.

Adam Clarke thinks Solomon sinned; Pulpit Commentary says he acted wisely; see them for their arguments.

Abiathar was high priest under David. He supported Adonijah in his attempt to gain the crown. Solomon said he was worthy of death, but because he had carried the ark and had suffered hardships with David he would spare him. In this move Solomon fulfilled a prophecy concerning the house of Eli. (1 Sam. 2: 31-35.) Eli was of the house of Ithamar, the youngest son of Aaron. Why the priesthood was changed from the house of Eleazar, the elder surviving son of Aaron, to the younger son we do not know. But in Abiathar we see he last of the house of Ithamar; and in Zadok, high priest under Solomon, we see the priesthood given back to the house of Eleazar.

Joab was next to be slain by Solomon. David charged Solomon to slay Joab because he murdered Ab-

ner and others, but Solomon had added reason to slay him because he had part in Adonijah's attempt to get the throne. Joab fled to the altar thinking to avoid death, but he was slain at the altar when he refused to leave it. (1 Kings 2: 28ff.)

Shimei, who cursed David while in flight from Absalom, was told he could live if he would stay in Jerusalem. After three years he left Jerusalem and was slain.

Solomon made the mistake of marrying an Egyptian princess to strengthen his relations with Egypt. This was in violation of the word of God. (Ex. 34: 16; 1 Kings 11: 1-8.) She and other foreign women whom Solomon married caused Solomon finally to go into idolatry. So we see even the wisest of men made their mistakes. How careful we should be lest we fall into error and finally into condemnation.

Exposition of the Text

I. Solomon Gratefully Chooses Wisely

(1 Kings 3: 4-9)

And the king went to Gibeon. This city was about six miles north of Jerusalem. Solomon went there because "that was the great high place." By this is meant a place of worship. And it was recognized as a place of worship because the tabernacle and the brazen altar made in the wilderness were there. (2 Chron. 1:

4, 5.) At the last mention of the tabernacle, it was at Nob, where Saul had Doeg to slay all the priests. (1 Sam. 22.) We have no record of its removal from there and hear no more of it until we learn of its being at Gibeon when Solomon came to the throne. We are also told that Solomon took the captains of thousands and of hundreds, the judges, the princes and the heads of fathers' houses with him to Gibeon. (2 Chron. 1: 2.) This was similar to the gathering of all Israel in Gilgal when Saul was accepted by all the people. (1 Sam. 11: 15.)

Jehovah appeared to Solomon in a dream. When Solomon, assisted of course by the people with him, had offered a thousand burnt offerings on the old altar that Bezalel, the grandson of Hur (Ex. 31: 1-5), had made, Jehovah responded and appeared to Solomon. The appearance was in a dream, but this is not to be taken to mean that Jehovah had

nothing to do with it. God said he would appear to his prophets in visions and dreams. (Num. 12: 6.) In this appearance of Jehovah, Solomon was told to ask of the Lord what he wished. Though it was not in these words, it is much the same proposition we often put to one another, If you had the right to ask for the one thing you desire most, for what would you ask?

Thou hast showed unto thy servant. Solomon began by showing his gratitude for what Jehovah had done for his father David. He was grateful that God had selected and blessed David with "great lovingkindness." It should be noticed that Solomon had great respect for his father David, for he said that his blessings were "according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee." Aside from a few outstanding blunders David had lived that kind of life,

(a) It should be noticed that truth, revealed truth, is mentioned first. David walked according to truth. No one can be pleasing to God who does not respect truth, the revealed will of God. (b) Righteousness refers to David's treatment of his fellow man. (c) Uprightness of heart refers to his attitude and disposition. This is inward; the former is outward expression. And as a part of David's reward Jehovah had

given him a son to sit on his throne.

Thou hast made thy servant king. Solomon's second cause for gratitude on this occasion was the fact that Jehovah had given him the throne of his father David. Gratitude is a wonderful trait of character, without which no one can be appreciated regardless of how much ability he has or how much he may accomplish. We should cultivate it prayerfully.

I am but a little child. Not only was Solomon grateful, but he was humble. He did not mean this literally, though David spoke of him as young and tender. (1 Chron. 22: 5.) According to our chronology, he was about twenty years of age. But he used this as an expression of his humility. He threw light on the meaning of this by saying, "I know not how to go out or come in," by which he meant that he did not know the first principles of the science of government of so great a nation. His humility is commendable.

Give thy servant therefore an understanding heart. This is the one thing he felt he needed most; of all the things he might ask for, this is first. He desired the ability to discern between good and evil so he would know how to judge his people. An understanding heart is more than intellectual ability; it includes sympathetic consideration for unfavorable circumstances and environments and for temptations and provocations which lie back of the deeds of the weak and simple; and it includes a keen sense of discernment to enable him to tear away the mask of hypocrisy and deceit and see through the duplicity and downright falsehoods of the crafty and wicked. It should be noticed that the king was expected to be the supreme judge of the people. That was part of their request when they asked for a king. (1 Sam. 8: 5.) That was Absalom's view of the matter and what he used to steal the hearts of David's people. (2 Sam. 15: 2-7.)

II. Jehovah Grants Solomon's Request

(1 Kings 3: 10-12)

Because thou hast asked this thing. We are told that Solomon's speech pleased the Lord. We may gather from this that the Lord is pleased with us when we do things which are right, and when we cultivate dispositions and desires which are in harmony with his will. Furthermore, this should be an example to

encourage us to cultivate an appreciation of those things which please the Lord; to make it our first aim to be pleasing to him rather than to please ourselves and just wish the Lord will let us get by with it.

Hast not asked for thyself long life. There are people who would prefer to live a thousand years in ignorance and worthlessness rather than to live their fourscore wisely and profitably; their greatest desire is to keep alive physically. That was not Solomon's first desire, and it should not be our first consideration.

Neither hast asked riches. Solomon realized that it was better "to get wisdom than gold! Yea, to get understanding is rather to be chosen than silver." (Prov. 16: 16.) He also said, "Receive my instructions, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared unto it." (Prov. 8: 10, 11.) For a twenty-year-old boy, Solomon was making some very wise decisions. How much he was being influenced by the Lord in this dream we have no way of knowing. The sad thing about all this is that he did not hold to these decisions all his life.

Nor hast asked the life of thine enemies. We have seen that Solomon had enemies who sought the throne, though they knew it had been promised to Solomon. It was the practice of newly-crowned kings to get rid of all who might give them trouble. And David advised Solomon to execute several of his enemies. But Solomon was a peaceable and peace-loving king; his name means *peaceful*. He was interested in wisdom to judge his people rather than vengeance to slay his enemies.

I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart. God gave Solomon the very thing for which he asked, (a) His prayer was answered because it was in harmony with God's will. In verse 10 we are told that Solomon's speech, including his request, pleased the Lord. (b) His request was granted because it was unselfish. If Solomon had prayed for long life, riches, or the life of his enemies, he would have given proof of being more interested in his own happiness than in that of others. James tells us we ask and do not receive because we ask for things to consume upon our own lusts. (James 4: 3.) God is pleased when we go

to him in prayer for other people. Of course he will listen to us when we take our own wants to him, but we must not forget to be interested in others, (c) The thing for which he prayed was needed. He was a young man without knowledge or experience in government. He was very much in need of that for which he prayed and had the common sense to realize it. Had he been proud and haughty, refusing to recognize and admit his need of wisdom, he would have been wholly unfit for the place he was in.

There hath been none like thee. This promise refers to the wisdom for which he had asked; he was to exceed all men before and after him in wisdom. And we are told that he was wiser than the men of the east and the wise men of Egypt. (1 Kings 4: 29-32.) The east refers to Babylon which was known for its Magi, or wise men and astrologers. Some of the outstanding men of learning are named as being surpassed by Solomon, who wrote three thousand proverbs and one thousand and five songs on a diversity of subjects.

m. Jehovah Exceeds Solomon's Request (1 Kings 3: 13-15)

And I have also given thee. Paul tells us that God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we are able to ask or think. (Eph. 3: 20.) So Jehovah did exceeding abundantly above what Solomon requested. The wise and unselfish demonstrate their ability to use what comes into their possession, so God is willing to give them even more than they ask. (a) Jehovah gave Solomon riches for which he did not ask. It is practically impossible to estimate Solomon's wealth. He had an annual income of six hundred sixty-six talents of gold. A talent has been variously estimated from twenty-five thousand to thirty-two thousand dollars in our money. Silver is said to have been as common in Jerusalem as stones. The reader should study 1 Kings 10: 14-29. (b) Honor was given Solomon in addition to that for which he asked. He was held in honor by all kings of the earth, and many of them came to Jerusalem to hear his wisdom and see his wealth. (1 Kings 1: 34.) The queen of Sheba came to hear and see and said the half had not been told her. In appreciation and to give honor which she thought was due

such a great man, she gave Solomon one hundred twenty talents of gold and many precious stones and great stores of valuable spices (1 Kings 10: 1-10.)

If thou wilt walk in my ways. The full blessing which Jehovah promised Solomon was contingent on his obedience to God. He started out well, and God blessed him more abundantly in wisdom, riches, and honor than any king we know about, but he could have enjoyed even greater blessings if he had been faithful to God. To walk in God's ways and to keep his statutes and commandments all mean the same thing. The blessings of God are always conditioned upon our obedience to him. His statutes and commandments are revealed to us in the Bible. Hence we are obligated to study to know what he wishes us to do; and if we expect to enjoy the blessings, we must obey him.

Then I will lengthen thy days. Solomon did not obey the Lord, and his days were not lengthened. He died at about sixty years of age, living ten years less than David.

And, behold, it was a dream. We may well raise this question. Was Solomon capable of making the speech recorded in verse 6 to 9? There is no question about his making the speech in his dream; but would he have made that speech while awake and without any impelling influence of the Lord? His later life throws considerable doubt on the probability that he would have made such wise choice. It is the feeling of this author that God caused Solomon to have this dream that he might influence him to live according to the standard set in the dream. When Solomon awoke from sleep, he was greatly impressed: it was a great religious experience, and it affected him deeply. No doubt he fully intended to realize his dream to the fullest extent possible; he set out with a full determination to be the man he had been in his dream. But actual life has its problems, its difficulties, and they wear and grind people down from their high hopes to low stem realities through the years. If Solomon could have had such a thrilling religious experience every night, and if each one had affected him as deeply as this one did, no doubt he would have lived the life he saw in his dream. But real life is not like that, and as the mem-

ory of this dream wore off and trials and temptations of everyday life wore him down, he missed his mark; he did not hit as high as he aimed.

Stood before the ark of the covenant. Solomon had a wonderful experience at Gibeon before the tabernacle and brazen altar; now he would honor God before the ark of the

covenant. He was impressed with his obligations; he was sensible of his weakness and unworthiness; and he was determined to offer such worship to God as would assure his help in living and serving as he should. This was noble in Solomon, and it is regrettable that he did not always feel this about worshipping Jehovah.

Relation to Our Aim

1. Place to remember, Gibeon. We first hear of this city when its people made a covenant with Joshua by deceit. (Josh. 9: 3-15.) It was in the land of Benjamin. It was the site of the battle between Joab and Abner, which resulted in so much hatred and finally in so many unnecessary deaths. (2 Sam. 2: 12-17.) It was here that Joab killed Amasa (2 Sam. 20: 4-13), and here at the altar Joab died (1 Kings 2: 28ff).

2. Person to remember. Solomon should be remembered as the writer of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. He is to be remembered as the builder of the temple. And we remember him as having the most promising beginning and the most regrettable ending of any of the kings of Israel. His end was no worse than that of Saul, but his beginning had greater promise.

3. Facts to remember, (a) Solomon's offerings at Gibeon, before he had his dream, prove his sincerity in seeking the help of Jehovah, (b) Solomon is to be commended for his gratitude and humility in so far as he realized the standard of his

dream, (c) His offerings before the ark of the covenant after his dream suggest his earnest intention to live up to the standard suggested in his dream.

4. Lessons to remember, (a) The fact that Solomon did not live as he should cannot be God's lack of showing him the standard and giving him all the encouragement necessary to stimulate him to attain the goal. And if we fail to be what we should be to gain a home in heaven, it will not be because God failed us. (b) There are many things worth more than material wealth. In this lesson we learn that wise and understanding heart is worth more than gold, silver, and precious stones, or wealth in any other form. We should try to translate this lesson into reality in our everyday life, (c) God's blessings are offered to us on condition we prove ourselves capable of using them to our good, the happiness of others, and the honor and glory of God. To the extent we fail so to use them, our blessings will be diminished; to the extent we succeed in so using them, they will be increased.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, place, and persons of the lesson.

Golden Text Explained

What is true wisdom? and understanding?

What does Joab say about man as the source of wisdom?

Explain how one can be highly educated and still not be wise and understanding.

How does Solomon compare wisdom and material wealth?

What does wisdom give us that we cannot get for sure from wealth or health?

What is the connection between wisdom and life and favor?

In your mind what is the greatest value of wisdom?

Why did Paul pray that people might be filled with wisdom and understanding?

How did Paul describe this worthy walk?

What did David counsel Solomon to do to make his throne secure?

Can you relate the circumstances of the death of Adonijah?

What did Solomon do with Abiathar the high priest?

What was done with Joab?

Was this agreeable to David?

What political move did Solomon make which proved to be a mistake?

Solomon Gratefully Chooses Wisely

Where was Gibeon?

Why did Solomon worship there?

Who accompanied Solomon for this worship?

What do you know of the extent of the offerings at Gibeon?

Who was the builder of the altar on which Solomon worshiped?

In what ways did Jehovah often appear to prophets?

How did Solomon manifest gratitude in his dream?

How did Solomon describe the life his father lived?

How did Jehovah reward David for this kind of life?

What was Solomon's second cause for gratitude?

How did Solomon express his humility?

For what one thing did Solomon ask Jehovah?
Why would Solomon need peculiar ability to judge people?

Jehovah Grants Solomon's Request

How did Solomon's speech affect the Lord?
What mention is made in our text of long life?
How did Solomon compare the value of wealth with that of wisdom?
What evidence do we have that Solomon was a man of peace?
State and discuss three reasons why Solomon's request was granted.
How did Solomon compare with other men in wisdom?

Jehovah Exceeds Solomon's Request

What does Paul say about God's ability to bless us?
What do you know of the riches given Solomon?

How was Solomon honored by his fellow men?
What condition was imposed upon Solomon to enjoy these blessings?
Do you think Solomon capable in real life of what he was in this dream?
How did the dream affect Solomon with reference to his future?
What tended to keep Solomon, as it does all of us, from reaching the mark in real life which he attained in his dream?
Before what ancient piece of furniture did Solomon worship in Jerusalem?

Relation to Our Aim

What do you know of the history of Gibeon?
For what things is Solomon to be remembered?
State and discuss three facts to be remembered.
Discuss as time permits three lessons to be remembered.

Lesson XIII—June 26, 1955

SOLOMON'S SIN AND FALL

Lesson Text

1 Kings 11: 4-13

4 For it came to pass, when Sol'-o-mon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not perfect with Je-ho'-vah his God, as was the heart of David his father.

5 For Sol'-o-mon went after Ash'-to-reth the goddess of the Si-do'-ni-ans, and after Mil'-com the abomination of the Am'-mon-ites.

6 And Sol'-o-mon did that which was evil in the sight of Je-ho'-vah, and went not fully after Je-ho'-vah, as did David his father.

7 Then did Sol'-o-mon build a high place for Che'-mosh the abomination of Mo'-ab, in the mount that is before Je-ru'-sa-lem, and for Mo'-lech the abomination of the children of Am'-mon.

8 And so did he for all his foreign wives, who burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods.

9 And Je-ho'-vah was angry with Sol'-o-mon, because his heart was

turned away from Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el, who had appeared unto him twice,

10 And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which Je-ho'-vah commanded.

11 Wherefore Je-ho'-vah said unto Sol'-o-mon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.

12 Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son.

13 Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but I will give one tribe to thy son, for David my servant's sake, and for Je-ru'-sa-lem's sake which I have chosen.

Golden Text.—"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. 10: 12.)

Devotional Heading.—1 Kings 11: 1-8.

Daily Bible Readings

- June 20. M.....The First Sin and Fall (Gen. 3: 9-24)
- June 21. T.....Origin of Sin (1 John 3: 4-12)
- June 22. W.....Warning Against Sin (Deut. 29: 14-21)
- June 23. T.....Sin Defined (John 3: 4; 5: 17)
- June 24. F.....Sin Separates from God (Isa. 59: 1, 2)
- June 25. S.....Sinning Against Knowledge (John 15: 18-25)
- June 26. S.....Jehovah Angry with Solomon (1 Kings 11: 1-13)

TIME.—984-975 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Solomon and his wives.

Golden Text Explained

1. There is a possibility of falling.

Our text implies the possibility of falling, regardless of the denominational errors of the day to the effect that a person once saved can never so fall as to be finally lost, (a) The one-talent man was a servant and was cast out in the day of accounts because he was unfaithful. (Matt. 25: 14-30.) By this Jesus teaches us that his servant who refuses to accept responsibility and does not render any service here will be cast out in the day of judgment. He gives added proof in the judgment scene when he tells those on his left hand to depart, for I was hungry and you did not feed me, naked and you did not clothe me, etc. (b) Jesus is the vine, and we are the branches (John 15: 1ff); if a branch does not bear fruit, it is taken away and burned. This teaches us that an individual in Christ who does not bear fruit of holiness will be destroyed, (c) Paul says we are debtors to live after the Spirit, not after the flesh; for if we live after the flesh, we must die. (Rom. 8: 12, 13.) To live after the flesh is to do the works of the flesh. (Gal. 5: 19-21.) So those who do such things shall not enter the kingdom of God; the death which is the penalty for such works is the second death in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. (Rev. 21: 8.) (d) The writer of Hebrews teaches us that it is possible so to fall that there is no possibility of renewing one to repentance. (Heb. 6: 4-8.) (e) And Peter tells us that one who has escaped the defilements of the world may become entangled therein again so that he is in worse condition than he was before he became a child of God. (2 Pet. 2: 20-22.)

2. Those who think there is no danger are in most danger. If eternal salvation is given to us unconditionally, there is no danger of falling so as to be lost; but if eternal salvation, eternal life, is given to us upon conditions, there is the possibility and the danger of failing to meet the conditions. As surely as there is a possibility of being lost because of failing to meet the conditions, just that

surely is he in most danger who fails to realize that he may or can be lost. Thinking there is no possibility of being lost takes one off his guard, lulls one into a feeling of security regardless of whether he serves or worships God according to his will, and tends to take from him all sense of responsibility. That eternal salvation is conditional and that condition is obedience to God's word is taught in these words, "He became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation." (Heb. 5: 9.) "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." (Rev. 2: 10.) Those who obey not the gospel shall have their part in the lake of fire and brimstone. (Rev. 21: 8; 2 Thess. 1: 8-10.)

3. What is implied in taking heed. Our text tells us to "take heed" lest we fall. (a) Taking heed implies that we shall recognize the possibility of falling and give attention to keeping ourselves from falling, (b) In taking heed, we should store the word of God in our hearts that we may not sin against him. (Psalm 119: 11.) Jesus had the word in his heart and used it in his fight against temptation. (Matt. 4: 1-11.) (c) We should recognize the presence of evil in the world and pray God to deliver us from temptation. Jesus taught his disciples to pray for deliverance. (Matt. 6: 13.) This implies that we are not able to stand alone. One who is too proud to admit his inability to stand alone will be inclined to believe there is no danger of falling, as well as the one who thinks his trust in God will keep him from falling regardless of how he lives, (d) We are to watch as well as pray lest Satan gain an advantage over us. (2 Cor. 2: 11.) And elders are to watch for our souls so they may give account of us with joy in the judgment. (Heb. 13: 17.) If there is no danger, no possibility, of our being lost, why should they watch? And why is there a possibility they may give account sorrowfully? The bleaching bones of two million people between Sinai and Canaan warn us to take heed. (1 Cor. 10: 1-11.)

Introduction

The extent of the kingdom under Solomon is of interest to us because it was during his reign that the kingdom reached its greatest extent. The advocates of the return of Christ to rule a thousand years on the earth say that he must rule in order for the promise made to Abraham concerning the land the Jews were to have to be fulfilled. They say the boundaries of the promise reached from Lebanon in the north to Egypt in the south; from Euphrates River in the east to the Mediterranean Sea on the west. In 1 Kings 4: 24, 25 we are told that Solomon had dominion over all that was "this side the River," which is the Euphrates. The phrase "from Tiphshah even to Gaza" gives the extent from east to west. Tiphshah was a city on the Euphrates where commerce and immigration could ford the river for some months in the year; it was the nerve center between the east and the west. Then in verse 25 we have "from Dan even to Beersheba," giving us the extent from north to south. Joshua says that Jehovah gave them all the land he swore to give them, and they possessed it and dwelt therein. (Josh. 21: 43.) And Joshua gives the Euphrates and the Lebanon and Mediterranean Sea as boundaries. (Josh. 1: 3, 4.) And when Solomon dedicated his temple, he praised Jehovah that not one word of his good promise had failed. (1 Kings 8: 56.) So there is no need for the return of the

Jews to Palestine or for Jesus to return to reign on the earth to fulfill the promise God made to Abraham; it has already been fulfilled.

The great public works during the reign of Solomon (1 Kings 9: 15) required a lot of money and material. Solomon had to borrow from Hiram, king of Tyre, one hundred twenty talents of gold, besides the material shipped from his country. Solomon either gave Hiram twenty cities on the border between them, or pledged them as security. (2 Chron. 8: 2.) But when Hiram inspected them, he was very much displeased with them. (1 Kings 9: 12.) In order to repay this large sum, Solomon had to levy excessive taxes. This became such a burden on the people that at the death of Solomon the people sent a committee to his son, Rehoboam, asking him to reduce the taxes. (1 Kings 12: 1ff.) When Rehoboam refused to reduce the taxes, ten tribes pulled away and established the kingdom of Israel with Jeroboam as their first king. Here we have an example of a nation coming to grief because of a too ambitious program of public works. Much of it was to satisfy the pride and worldly ambition of Solomon and the pleasure-loving men associated with him in the government. The welfare of the common man was sacrificed for the pleasure of the wealthy. This same principle can still result in the fall of nations.

Exposition of the Text

I. Cause of Solomon's Sin (1 Kings

11: 4)

When Solomon was old. At what time during the reign of Solomon he began to be influenced by these strange wives we cannot know. But there was sufficient time for him to build temples. And since such gross apostasy as idolatry does not come on a man suddenly, we may be sure Solomon was not more than fifty years old when he drifted into this sin.

His wives turned away his heart. These were the women of foreign lands who brought their religion with them. If a man as wise and strong as Solomon could be led away into false religion by an unbelieving spouse, why say some there is no danger to young people of the church marrying unbelievers? The fact that

we know of a few who have been strong enough to convert their spouses to the Lord does not make up for the *many* who have been lost to the Lord by the seductive influence of the unbeliever. Since Solomon said, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22: 6), what are we to conclude with reference to his training in childhood? Was David too busy with affairs of state to give his son the proper training? Parents should take warning from this example of the lack of proper training.

His heart was not perfect with Jehovah. Here we see the cause of Solomon's sin; his heart was not right. Sin begins in the heart. (Mark 7: 21; James 1: 14; Prov. 4: 23.) His heart was filled with affairs of

state, interest in too many women, and pleasures of this life; the good seed were choked by the things of this world so that they had no chance to grow and produce fruit acceptable to the Lord. (Matt. 13: 22.) The reader should study Ecclesiastes in this connection to see that Solomon applied his *heart* to various things—wisdom of the world, madness, folly, pleasure, how to cheer his flesh with wine, and whatsoever his eyes desired, and withheld not his heart from any joy—and in this search through worldliness for pleasure his heart was led away from God. He should have given himself to the cultivation of a love for and appreciation of heavenly things so his heart might have been filled with and established heavenly mindedness. If this appears to you a drab life with no thrills and excitements, you are traveling in the wrong direction.

As was the heart of David. This does not mean that David was sinless. The word perfect has the sense of *complete* rather than sinlessness; one definition" of the word is *fully*. So Solomon's heart was not fully with the Lord. David's heart was fully set on Jehovah in that he had no inclination to worship other gods. His intention and desire were to do right, but weakness of the flesh hindered at times.

II. Extent of Solomon's Sin (1 Kings 11: 5-8)

Solomon went after Ashtoreth. This is said to be the goddess of the Sidonians, and these were Phoenicians, as Sidon was a city of Phoenicia. Baal was the male god and Ashtoreth, Astarte, was the female. Baal was the god of generative powers and Ashtoreth the goddess of productive powers. The forms of worship were lewd, and the result on the worshiper was debasing. This is the first time the word in the singular appears in the Old Testament; the plural is Ashtoroath.

Mil com the abomination of the Ammonites. This god is said to be the abomination of the Ammonites and in verse 7 Molech is said to be the abomination of the children of Ammon. So we conclude that the two words refer to the same god. He is called a fire god, because of human sacrifices made to him. "Fire-gods appear to have been common to all the Canaanites, Syrian, and Arab tribes, who worshipped the destruc-

tive elements under an outward symbol, with the most inhuman rites. Among these were human sacrifices, purifications and ordeals by fire, devoting of the first-born, mutilation, and vows of perpetual virginity and celibacy. To this class of divinities belong the old Canaanitish Molech, against whose worship the Israelites were warned by threats of the severest punishment. The offender who devoted his offspring to Molech was to be put to death by stoning; and in case the people of the land refused to inflict upon him the judgment, Jehovah himself would execute it, and cut him off from among the peoples. (Lev. xviii. 21; xx. 2-5.)" The Ammonites were descended from Lot and his younger daughter. (Gen. 19: 38.) They seem to have had no land, but were a roving people, usually east of the Jordan.

Solomon did that which was evil. There is division of sentiment as to whether Solomon ever actually worshiped idols. Some urge (a) the Bible nowhere says he served or worshiped them; (b) the statement "went not fully after Jehovah", is thought to mean that he never fully apostatised as he would have done had he actually gone over to idolatry. But the statement "he went after" other gods is used in many places to mean actual worship of other gods. A curse is pronounced upon those who "go after other gods." (Deut. 11: 28.) To go after other gods is said to be for the purpose of serving them. (Deut. 28: 14.)

Then did Solomon build a high place. A high place was simply a place of worship. Solomon built a place of worship to Chemosh, the god of the Moabites. (Num. 21: 29.) This god was also associated with the Hittites of a more ancient time, according to the information gained from the "Moabite stone." The name means *subduer*, and so some think he was the god of war, while others refer to him as the god of fire. Information concerning all these heathen gods is very uncertain and unsatisfactory. Sources differ so widely that we are forced to conclude that what information we have rests on guesses.

So did he for all his foreign wives. The place of the building of these temples for foreign heathen gods is said to be the mount that is before Jerusalem, and this is mount Olivet. The cost of these temples was borne

by the treasury which was supplied by taxation of the people. We can easily see why the people objected to the excessive taxes they were required to pay, since some of it was being spent to destroy their religion and that of their fathers.

III. Consequences of Solomon's Sin

(1 Kings 11: 9-13)

Jehovah was angry with Solomon. Anger in God denotes a very high degree of displeasure. God was highly displeased with the conduct of Solomon in building these temples to heathen gods, if he did not actually engage in the worship himself. The building of the temples was proof of the fact that his heart was turned away from Jehovah. Had his heart been fully given to Jehovah he would never have married these foreign women; but his heart had to be even more turned away from Jehovah to encourage idolatry in the city where Jehovah's name was recorded.

Had appeared unto him twice.

This is given as a reason why Jehovah's anger was kindled to so great an extent, (a) The first appearances of Jehovah mentioned here was at Gibeon, where God impressed Solomon deeply in a dream, starting him on the right way. (b) The second time God appeared to Solomon was when he had finished building the temple. (1 Kings 9: 1-9.) At that time Jehovah promised Solomon that he would establish the kingdom in his house forever if he would follow him faithfully; but he solemnly warned him of dire punishment if he served and worshiped other gods. So the degree of anger of Jehovah at Solomon's sin was on account of the fact that (a) he sinned against light;

(b) he sinned against repeated warnings; (c) he sinned in spite of greater wisdom than God gave any other man. Looking at his sin from the negative side, we observe (a) he did not sin because he was discouraged by poverty and hardships occasioned thereby; (b) he did not sin because he was in a foreign land surrounded by people who brought great pressure on him to comply with their wishes; (c) he did not sin because he wished to gain the favor of some in high positions socially and politically; (d) nor did he sin because he was caught unawares and pressed for a decision on the spur of the moment. There is no justifi-

cation, not even mitigating circumstances, for Solomon's attitude toward idolatry.

Forasmuch as this is done of thee. The penalty to be suffered was said expressly to be on account of the fact that Solomon had done this in spite of God's statutes and commandments to the contrary. Many people today think lightly of neglecting to do that which God commands, or of doing that which God forbids, especially if there is no moral principle involved. The matter of how to worship God seems to be of little consequence to them; they have determined to do as they please regardless of what God says in his word. They should take warning from Jehovah's punishment of Solomon.

I will surely rend the kingdom from thee. Since there is no indication of the appearance of Jehovah as he had appeared to him twice before, we conclude that this message was given him through a prophet. His kingdom was to be taken away from him in spite of all the fortifications he had raised, in spite of all his vast wealth and his connections with the powerful nations of the world.

Will give it to thy servant. This implies that the kingdom was not to be humbled and taken by a foreign power, but a servant, a hireling. Later we learn that this one was Jeroboam of the tribe of Ephraim. Ahijah, the prophet, told Jeroboam that he was to get the greater portion of the kingdom, ten tribes. (1 Kings 11: 26ff.) Solomon seems to refer to the humiliation of seeing his kingdom go to a hireling when he wrote, "And I hated all my labor wherein I labored under the sun. seeing that I must leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he will be a wise man or a fool?" (Eccles. 2: 18, 19a.)

I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Jehovah promised Solomon he would not rend the kingdom from him during his lifetime. However, this favor was not extended to Solomon on account of anything he did, or because he was due such consideration, but for the sake of his father David. Solomon's sin was so grievous that he deserved to lose the kingdom, but there were other considerations which made it best for him to retain it in peace until his death. He was wise and wealthier than David from the world's point

of view, but he did not have the power and influence at the throne of grace which David had. This should teach us that there are some things worth more, even in this life, than wealth and worldly wisdom.

I will not rend away all the kingdom. Here is another consideration shown Solomon, but again it was not because of any merit of his, but it was on account of the love God had for David and for Jerusalem. God had promised to give David a son in whom the throne would be established in heaven, and to keep that promise David's line had to be prolonged until the birth of the Messiah. When Jesus came and the kingdom was established with its throne in heaven, God's promise to David was

fulfilled. (Acts 13: 32-37.) And this mercy was partly on account of Jerusalem, the place where God was worshiped. But since "neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem" shall men worship the Father (John 4: 21), the city has no further claim to the mercy and providence of God.

I will give one tribe to thy son. This was the tribe of Judah, of which all kings were descendants of David. However, Benjamin went along with Judah. And so many of the priests and Levites moved into Judah that the king of Judah, the southern kingdom, really had three tribes, and ten went with Jeroboam to form the northern kingdom, Israel. (1 Kings 12: 21; 2 Chron. 11: 13.)

Relation to Our Aim

1. Persons to remember. Jeroboam, the servant of Solomon, should be remembered as an Ephraimite, should be kept in mind as the man who should get the lion's share of the kingdom from the son of Solomon, Rehoboam.

2. Facts to remember, (a) Solomon proved unfaithful to Jehovah to please his wives, (b) God punishes sin in people regardless of their rank or station; neither his wealth, wisdom nor power could keep Solomon from reaping what he sowed. (c) God did not forget David's faithfulness, but showed mercy to his son on account of his faithfulness, (d) Jehovah kept his promise to David regardless of how sinful his sons became.

3. Lessons to remember, (a) Solomon is an example of a man falling from grace into idolatry, and unless he repented he must have been lost, for not idolater can go to heaven, (b) God is a covenant keeping God

and will not break his promises to us. Men often fail to meet conditions on which God promises to bless them so that he is released from the obligation to bless them. But if men keep their part of the covenant, God never fails to bless them as he promised, (c) Solomon's kingdom began to weaken and crumble when he brought in the first foreign wife and her gods. The church today is in danger of being weakened and destroyed by the introduction of foreign elements of doctrine and practice. Churches are growing rapidly, but some of the material being brought in is not really converted, and people are bringing some of their foreign gods (doctrines and practices of the denominations from which they came) into the church with them. If the church does not do a better job of teaching, these foreign elements will become so strong that their influence will prevail to carry the church into worldliness and unscriptural practices.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of this lesson?
Repeat the golden text from memory.
Give the time, place, and persons of the lesson.

Golden Text Explained

Can you prove that a servant of Jesus can be lost in judgment?
Can you teach a lesson on apostasy from the parable of the vine and branches?
What is meant by living after the flesh?
What is the consequence of it?
Can one fall so as never to return?
How does Peter teach the possibility of apostasy?
Can you prove that eternal salvation is conditioned upon obedience?
Who are in greatest danger of falling from grace?

Name and discuss four things implied in taking heed lest we fall.

Introduction

Why is the extent of the kingdom of Solomon of interest to us?
Can you show that God gave the Jews all he ever promised to give them?
Where did Solomon get money and material for his public works?
What did Solomon give Hiram as security?
Was Hiram pleased?
What unpopular means did Solomon adopt to repay what he borrowed?
What did this high tax finally result in for Solomon's son?
How was the welfare of the common man sacrificed for the wealthy?

What do you think of this as a principle of the science of government?

Cause of Solomon's Sin

What do you know of Solomon's age when he went into sin?

Where was the seat of Solomon's sin?

What was the primary cause of Solomon's sin?

Do you think Solomon's experience with foreign wives is a warning to Christians today to marry in the church?

What does Solomon's sin imply with reference to his home training?

With what does Solomon say he filled his heart?

What is meant in our text by a perfect heart?

Who is given as an example of a perfect heart?

Extent of Solomon's Sin

What do you know of Ashtoreth? and of Milcom? and of Chemosh?

Who were the Ammonites and where did they live?

Do you think Solomon actually offered sacrifices to heathen gods?

What is a "high place" in the language of our text?

Where did Solomon build the temples for the heathen gods?

Consequences of Solomon's Sin

What does the word anger mean when used with reference to God?

On what two occasions did Jehovah appear to Solomon?

Why was God's anger kindled so against Solomon?

Discuss four things on the negative side which Solomon could not give as justification for his sin.

What did Solomon's attitude toward God's word have to do with his guilt?

What was to be taken from Solomon as a penalty for his sin?

To whom was Solomon's kingdom to be given?

How was the execution of the penalty softened?

For whose sake was the penalty softened? How much of the kingdom was taken from Solomon's son and to whom given?

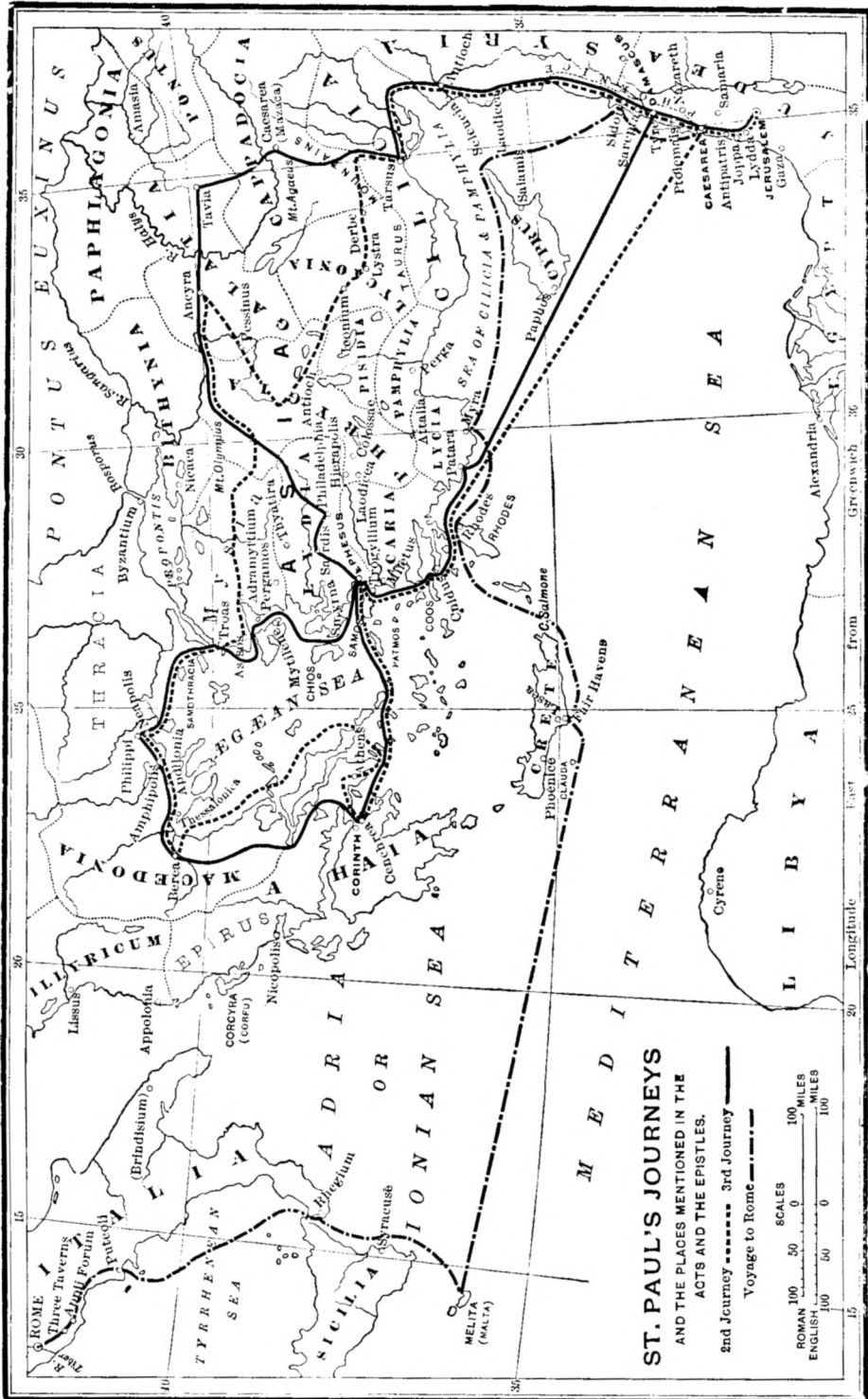
How many tribes stayed with Solomon's son and how many went away?

Relation to Our Aim

What do you know of Jeroboam and of Rehoboam?

State and discuss three facts to remember. State and discuss as time will permit three lessons to remember.

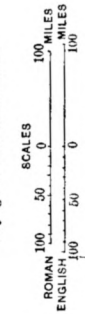
Is there an application to make to present-day conditions?



ST. PAUL'S JOURNEYS

AND THE PLACES MENTIONED IN THE ACTS AND THE EPISTLES.

2nd Journey - - - - - 3rd Journey ———
 Voyage to Rome - · - · - ·



Longitude from East to West

THIRD QUARTER

AIM.—To study portions of Paul's letters to the Romans and the Galatians, and to learn their message and meaning not only to those to whom they were originally written, but to ourselves today.

Lesson I—July 3, 1955

PAUL WRITES TO THE SAINTS AT ROME

Lesson Text

Rom. 1: 1-10, 14-17

1 Paul, a servant of Je'-sus Christ, called to *be* an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

2 Which he promised afore through his prophets in the holy scriptures,

3 Concerning his Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh,

4 Who was declared to *be* the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead; *even* Je'-sus Christ our Lord,

5 Through whom we received grace and apostleship, unto obedience of faith among all the nations, for his name's sake;

6 Among whom are ye also, called to *be* Je'-sus Christ's:

7 To all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to *be* saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Je'-sus Christ.

8 First, I thank my God through Je'-sus Christ for you all, that your

faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world.

9 For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of his Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers

10 Making request, if by any means now at length I may be prospered by the will of God to come unto you.

14 I am debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.

15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome.

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

17 For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith.

Golden Text.—“For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established ” (Rom. 1: 11.)

Devotional Reading.—Rom. 12: 1-16.

Daily Bible Readings

June 27. M.....	Paul Appeals to Caesar (Acts 25: 6-12)
June 28. T.....	Voyage to Rome (Acts 28: 11-16)
June 29. W.....	Paul in Rome. (Acts 28: 19-22)
June 30. T.....	Faith of the Church (Rom. 1: 8-15)
July 1. F.....	Paul Asks for Prayers (Rom. 15: 30-33)
July 2. S.....	Greetings to Christians at Rome (Rom. 16: 3-16)
July 3. S.....	Companions of Paul at Rome (Acts 18: 1-4)

TIME.—A.D. 58.

PLACES.—Written from Corinth to saints in Rome.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints at Rome.

Golden Text Explained

1. I long; to see you. (a) Paul had an interest in all the churches all over the world. (2 Cor. 11: 28.) In this he is an example to us. So many of us know nothing of the progress, the trials, and the hardships of any church except the one where we worship. We keep posted on the

things in which ye are interested. The man who is interested in sports will use every means available to keep up to date with information on the players, the standing of the various teams in the league, and which team has the best chance to win the pennant. But that same man may

not know a thing about the programs of the various congregations in the county where he lives, and still less about the work and growth of churches in other states and nations.

(b) Paul had a special interest in Gentile churches. He says that he was entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, that he should go unto the Gentiles. (Gal. 2: 7-

10.) Again, he says that it was the grace of God that he should be a minister of God to the Gentiles. (Rom. 15: 15, 16.) The church at Rome was predominantly Gentile, so he was all the more interested in it.

(c) He had entertained a desire for a long time to go to Rome and had often made plans to do so. ((Rom. 1: 13.) While at Ephesus Paul expressed a desire to go to Rome. (Acts 19: 21.) He said he had longed "many years" to see the saints at Rome. (Rom. 15: 22-25.)

2. **To impart spiritual gifts.** (a) What are these spiritual gifts? So far as the meaning of the term "spiritual gifts" is concerned, it may mean either the nine gifts of the Spirit of a miraculous nature mentioned in 1 Cor. 12: 4-11, or it may mean the Christian graces, any quality of character wrought in us by the work of the Holy Spirit. But that Paul does not mean the latter is clear because, first, he did not have to be present to impart such teaching as would enable the Holy Spirit to work such improvement in their characters. If an apostle had to be present to cultivate the Christian graces, none of us could possibly have them. Next, while enumerating the gifts they possessed, Paul mentioned prophecy along with a number of natural gifts. (Rom. 12: 6-8.) Since this is the only miraculous gift he mentioned, we conclude that it is the only one possessed by the church at Rome. But since the gift of prophecy enabled them to edify, exhort, and console (1 Cor. 14: 3), and the church possessed this gift, Paul's presence there was not necessary that they might have such gifts as would give them the Christian graces. Hence we conclude that the gifts Paul had in mind were the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, (b) How are these gifts bestowed? When the church at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the gospel, they sent Peter and John, apostles, to lay their hands on and pray for Christians that they might receive the Holy Spirit in mira-

cle-working measure. And we are told that Simon saw that "through the laying on of the apostles' hands" these miraculous powers were given. There is no statement or example in the New Testament that says or implies that any one except an apostle impart these spiritual gifts. Hence we conclude that such gifts were imparted only by apostles, (c) From this we can understand why Paul had so great a desire to go to Rome. So far as we know they had only one miraculous gift, that of prophecy. It does not follow that the church at Rome never had any other miraculous gifts, for those possessing them may have died. When sojourners from Rome, both Jews and proselytes" (Acts 2: 10), obeyed the gospel in Jerusalem, they were given the powers needed for establishing the church and caring for it during that time when miracles were needed. But nearly thirty years have passed since Pentecost and those possessing these powers may have died, leaving the church in need of more spiritual gifts.

3. **The purpose of Paul's visit,** (a) Paul says that he wished to go to Rome that he might have some fruit among them, "even as in the rest of the Gentiles." (Rom. 1: 13.) This implies that he had never been there before. If he had been there and worked with the church previous to this time, he would have had fruit there already. Catholic tradition says that Paul and Peter established the church in Rome, but we know this is not true, for Paul had no fruit among them. This also suggests that no apostle was there at the time Paul wrote this letter. Roman Catholic tradition says that Peter went there about A.D. 42 and remained as bishop of the church, and Pope over all churches, until the time of his death shortly before A.D. 70. If Peter had been in Rome, it would have been presumptuous for Paul to say he wished to go there to impart some spiritual gift that they might be established. Would any Roman Catholic official in the world say today that he wishes to go to Rome to impart some spiritual blessing to the church? The Pope would consider such as an insult and would surely discipline such a presumptuous official. The same tradition which tells us that Peter was bishop in Rome tells us that Paul and Peter

established the church in Rome. We know the latter is untrue, so have little reason to believe the tradition as to the former, (b) Paul tells us that he wished to go to Rome to impart spiritual gifts "to the end that ye may be established." This does refer to the establishment of the church in the sense of building, or planting, it in a city, for the church was already in existence, and their faith proclaimed throughout the world. (Rom. 1: 8.) But it means to confirm and strengthen the church. Paul knew that possession of all the

spiritual gifts would be a great encouragement to the church and that it would make the church a stronger force in the area which it served. With the gift of prophecy they could preach and teach all truth necessary, but without the power to work miracles they could not confirm the word preached. Without the New Testament already confirmed by the miracles recorded, the early church was dependant upon miracles to prove the truth of their message. Hence, there was good reason for Paul's desire to go to Rome.

Exposition of the Text

I. Paul's Introduction (Rom. 1: 1-7)

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ. Attention is called to the simple, humble way Paul introduces himself. He is a bond *man*, a slave, of Jesus Christ. As such, he did not belong to himself, nor was he free to go where and do what he pleased. However, this bondage was not degrading in its nature, but ennobling and refining. It should be remembered that Paul was no more a slave of Jesus Christ than we are. This emphasizes his humility because he conceived himself to be no better than the humblest in the church. It reminds us that we are the slaves of Jesus Christ, bound to do his will in preference to our own and to give him our time, talent and energies.

Called to be an apostle. The words *to be* are supplied by the translators and perhaps do not add to the strength of the statement. Paul says he was a called apostle, and to the Galatians he added the fact that his call was "not from men, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father." (Gal. 1: 1.) In his speech to Agrippa he tells of this call. (Acts 26: 16-18.)

Separated unto the gospel. The word translated *separated* means to divide, or separate, one thing from another by means of dividing lines. Paul was separated from worldly pursuits to that of gospel work. He tells us that this separation to gospel work took place from his birth. (Gal. 1: 15, 16.) Of course this was in the plan and purpose of God, according to God's ability to foresee. We are not to conclude that Paul was forced to do as he did that God's plans might be accomplished.

Which he promised afore. (1) We should notice that this passage says the gospel is from God, indicating

its value and the danger of disobeying it. (2) This gospel was promised in ages past; it was not hurriedly devised to meet some unexpected turn of events or circumstances. (3) This gospel was promised through the prophets. Here we have New Testament recognition of the prophets and of the fact that God spoke through them. (4) This gospel was not only spoken of by the prophets, but the promise of it was written by the prophets "in the holy scriptures." And here we have New Testament recognition of the Old Testament as the inspired word of God. If we accept Paul as an inspired writer, we must also accept the Old Testament prophets as inspired messengers of God. And with this conclusion Peter is in complete agreement. (1 Pet. 1: 10-12.)

Concerning his Son. This tells us that the gospel from God is a message concerning his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the heart of the gospel, and everything in the gospel derives its meaning and value from him.

Born of the seed of David. This statement is made only of the *flesh* of Jesus. Paul is careful to limit this originated being, or nature, of Jesus by the use of the word *flesh*. And it was necessary to identify him with David since the Messiah was to be the son of David. (Matt. 22: 41-45.) But it is obvious that nothing more than *flesh*, human nature, could be derived from David.

Declared to be the Son of God. Jesus was more than a human being. According to the *flesh*, outer man, he was the son of David; but according to the "spirit of holiness," or "pure spirit," the inner man, he was the Son of God. Lack of space forbids that we go into a full discussion of the question of the eternal sonship

of Christ, whether he was from eternity been the Son of God or whether he became Son of God by virtue of being begotten by the Holy Spirit and born of Mary. But we suggest (1) this verse does not say he was made, or constituted the Son of God; he was "declared" to be that which he already was. (2) It was his flesh, human nature, begotten of the Holy Spirit and born of Mary. Paul affirms that his inner nature, that which he did not derive from David, was declared to be the Son of God. If he did not derive it from David, it was eternal. So that which is eternal is called the Son of God. If Jesus is Son of God *only* because his human nature was begotten of God, it is difficult to understand why Adam was not as much the "Son of God" as was Jesus.

By the resurrection from the dead. The resurrection is said to be the proof of his sonship, or that by which he was declared to be the Son of God. Instead of "from the dead," the Greek is more literally translated "of the dead." Lard in his "Commentary on Homans" argues that Jesus was declared to be the Son of God by the fact that he raised people from the dead. Though his argument has merit, we decide in favor of the general view that the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the meaning. He claimed to be the Son of God; he was put to death for making the claim; God endorsed his claim by raising him from the dead; thousands of Jews, who refused to believe he was the Son of God before his death, turned to accept him as such when they were convinced that he was raised from the dead; and we hold the resurrection to be the climax of all proof that he is the Son of God.

Through whom we received grace and apostleship. The grace is simply the favor of being allowed to become a Christian. He calls it mercy in 1 Tim. 1: 16. And his selection as an apostle was through Jesus Christ. (Gal. 1: 1.)

Unto obedience of faith. Here we are told that Paul became a Christian and an apostle in order to lead people to obey the gospel because of their faith in Jesus Christ. Our obedience springs from the belief or faith we have in our hearts. Obedience which does not spring from faith is not acceptable to God. We should feel as did Paul that we have

been favored with salvation that we may lead others to obey because of their belief.

Called to be Jesus Christ's. We are called through the preaching of the gospel. (2 Thess. 2: 14.) Calling denotes no more than inviting, and there is no such thing as irresistible calling. When one responds to the call, he is chosen, elected. The group who have accepted the call are "the called," "the elect" of God.

Called to be saints. A saint is a sanctified person, one who is separated from the world and consecrated to God. The Roman Catholic use of the word has so influenced the religious world that people generally think one must be dead a long time before he can be a saint. But New Testament use of the word contemplates a living person consecrated to the service of God. It has the idea of purity and holiness because one is not fit to serve God who is impure or unholy.

II. Paul's Interest in Rome (Rom. 1:

8-10)

I thank my God. Paul had a habit of mentioning good things he knew about people and churches in the beginning of his letters. It is good policy to do so, and it reflects a fine spirit. From this we learn that our prayers are to be offered to God through Jesus Christ. We also learn that we should mention others in our prayers.

That your faith is proclaimed. Had their faith not manifested itself through good works, people would not have known about it. James teaches us that faith can be manifested only through good works. (James 2: 14-18.) So the good works of the church at Rome were so outstanding as to attract the attention of the whole world. Of course this "whole world" is to be taken with some limitation—certainly the then known world. This suggests that the church at Rome was active in sending the gospel to faraway places. The same might have been said of the church at Antioch which sent Paul and others to distant lands to preach the gospel. There are several churches among us today whose faith is proclaimed over many nations by their missionary efforts.

For God is my witness. Paul often calls upon God to witness the truth of statements he makes. (Rom. 9: 1; 2 Cor. 1: 23; 11: 31.) He has no

concrete evidence to offer as proof of the truth, so he calls upon God as a witness to the truth of his statement.

Whom I serve in my spirit. Paul's service was not for money, or fame; it was not a cold outward service. It came from his heart; his whole soul was in it. And the next phrase, "in the gospel of his Son," limits the service of which he speaks. His whole gospel ministry was a service of the heart. Preachers of the gospel today may learn a lesson from Paul's view of his ministry.

I make mention of you. Paul says he mentions the Roman church "unceasingly" in his prayers. This is a strong term and may mean that in every prayer he offers he mentions the church at Rome and repeats his request that he be allowed to go there. He goes on to say that he prays that it may be the will of God for him to go to Rome. This implies that God has a will with reference to where preachers of the gospel labor and that they should pray to know and be able to do his will. Preachers who take their work seriously will make the will of God the determining factor instead of salary and prestige. Men who allow salary and prestige to determine where they preach the gospel are not worthy of the confidence and respect of brethren. On account of the economic system under which we live, salary has to be taken into consideration, but it must not be allowed to be the sole or dominant consideration.

III. Paul's View of the Gospel (Rom.

1: 14-17)

I am debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians. Paul was not in debt to these classes because of anything they had done for him, but because of the grace of God in calling him to preach the gospel to all. (Acts 9: 15.) The words Greeks and Barbarians are used here more along cultural lines than national. Though the Romans claimed Grecian background, they are included with the Greeks here on account of their culture and refinement. The word Barbarian means a foreigner, one who speaks a different language. Paul said to those who wished to use gift of tongues too much, "If then I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be to him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh will be a barbarian unto me." (1 Cor. 14: 11.)

The two terms, like the "wise and the unwise," are intended to include all mankind.

I am ready to preach the gospel. This was Paul's way of paying his debt to mankind. Refusing to pay one's debts is dishonorable. If all of us could feel, as did Paul, our debt to humanity, and would resolve to pay it like he did, there would be a lot more gospel preaching and teaching than there is at present. Since this letter is addressed to the saints in Rome, and Paul said he was willing to *preach* the gospel to the people to whom it is addressed, it follows that Paul was ready to preach the gospel to the saints in Rome.

I am not ashamed of the gospel. Paul's readiness to preach the gospel is explained on the ground that it is nothing of which to be ashamed. In spite of the fact he had just classed his readers as "Greeks" and "wise," he was still not ashamed to preach the gospel to them. There are at least three good reasons for not being ashamed of the gospel: (1) the *person* of the gospel is Jesus Christ of whom none should be ashamed; (2) the *power* of the gospel to lift men out of sin and transform them into saints is something of which all may be proud; and (3) the *perfection* of morals held up by the gospel as the standard toward which all should strive is something of which no one need be ashamed.

For *it is the power of God.* When Paul says the gospel is God's power to save, he excludes or forbids anything else being considered as God's power to save. So we conclude that the gospel is God's only power through which he saves men. If a man rejects the gospel, there is no hope of his salvation. To know God is eternal life. (John 17: 3.) No one can know God unless the Son reveal him. (Matt. 11: 27.) The revelation of God in Christ is made known through the gospel, and for that reason God ordained that it should be preached to save men. (1 Cor. 1: 21.) Hence, no one can have that salvation which comes through a knowledge of God without hearing, believing, and obeying the gospel of Christ.

To *every one that believeth.* The gospel is God's power to save the believer. There is no power in heaven, earth, or hell to save the un-

believer; he is already condemned. (John 3: 18.) Until the unbeliever turns from unbelief to belief of the gospel he is lost. The gospel is preached that the unbeliever may turn to believe in Jesus. (John 20: 30, 31.) If faith in Jesus Christ is essential to salvation and if faith comes by hearing the word of God (John 8: 24; Rom. 10: 17), it follows that all who do not hear the gospel are lost. Since we are entrusted with the gospel to preach it to the whole creation, it follows that all who are lost on account of not hearing the gospel will be lost because we did not do our duty. How imperative it is that we do all we can to preach the gospel to all!

For therein is revealed a righteousness of God. This is assigned as a reason why the gospel is God's power to save the believer. The word *righteousness* does not mean that attribute of God which distinguishes him as being perfectly just and holy. Nor does it mean a quality attributed or imputed to us on account of the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. Righteousness in this verse means that state in which we are accounted to be righteous, or justified before God. Lard translates this phrase in these words: "For in it is revealed God's justification by belief in order to belief." The thought is that the gospel is God's power to save believers because in the gospel is revealed the fact that God justifies on the ground of belief instead of on the ground of the works of the law. None can be righteous in God's sight on the ground of his own goodness, or on the ground of his perfect obedience to God's law. The only way one can be righteous in God's sight is through the forgiveness of God. When God forgives, he

treats one as that one would have been treated if he had never sinned. So that state of righteousness is attained, not through our own works or goodness, but through justification; and that justification is had on account of our faith, a faith which obeys God.

From faith unto faith. The justification is from, or on account of, our faith and it is unto, or in order to, faith. The gospel is God's power to save because in it is revealed a justification by faith in order that men may believe. If I am told that I may be justified on the ground of perfect obedience to law, there is no inducement to me to believe, or accept that doctrine. But if I am told that I may be justified on the ground of my faith in Jesus Christ, I am encouraged to hope that I can meet the condition and so I am led to believe. So the power of the gospel is in the fact that it offers salvation on a condition which fallen sinful man can hope to meet.

The righteous shall live by faith. Paul quotes the prophet Habakkuk as preaching this same doctrine. This statement is capable of two interpretations which express a truth. (1) Those who are justified by faith shall live. (2) Those who are just shall live by faith. The Septuagint and Syriac version support the first. Lard adopts it in his commentary as being in line with the thought Paul was quoting the prophet to prove. Adam Clarke says this is probably the true interpretation. McGarvey, though adopting the statement of the second, practically comes to the meaning of the first when he says, "If his righteousness redeems him from sin and death and so entitles him to live, it does so because it is a righteousness obtained by faith."

Lessons to Learn

1. Jesus Christ the son of David and the Son of God, as human as we are and as divine as God is, was yet one individual; we cannot comprehend him, but we stand in wonder at him, we adore him and we put our trust in him to save us from sin.

2. Paul had a great desire to go to Rome, but he did not cease to labor where he felt God wanted him to serve just to satisfy his desire to travel. He was more concerned about doing God's will than he was in satis-

fying his desire to see other people and places.

3. God has placed a fearful responsibility upon us by entrusting to our keeping the only power he has to save souls. God has voluntarily limited himself in the exercise of his power to save souls, so far as number is concerned, by placing in our hands the power to save them. If we take it to many, large numbers will be saved; if we take it to few, only a small number of people will be saved.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?
Repeat the golden text from memory.
Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

What do you know of Paul's interest in the welfare of churches?
To what extent should we be interested in the work and success of other congregations?
Why was Paul especially interested in Gentile churches?
What do you know of Paul's desire to go to Rome?
What were the spiritual gifts Paul desired to give the Roman church?
What spiritual gift did this church possess?
What do you know of the manner in which these spiritual gifts were imparted?
What proof do we have that Paul had never been in Rome?
What evidence do we have that Peter was not in Rome when Paul wrote this letter?
Why did Paul wish to impart spiritual gifts?
What is the meaning of "establish"?

Paul's Introduction

What evidence do we have in this letter of Paul's humility?
When and by whom was Paul called to be an apostle?
When was he separated unto the gospel?
From whom does Paul say our gospel comes?
What proof do we have that the gospel was not hurriedly devised?
How does Paul recognize the prophets of old as inspired?

What was Paul's conception of the Old Testament scriptures?
How does Paul identify Jesus Christ with David?
What does Paul say of Jesus Christ according to the spirit of holiness?
How was Jesus Christ declared to be the Son of God?
What is meant by "obedience of faith"?
Who is a saint?
How are we called to be saints?

Paul's Interest in Rome

What good things did Paul say about the church at Rome?
How is faith manifested and proclaimed?
How did Paul describe his service to God?
How often did Paul mention the church at Rome in his prayers?
What did the will of God have to do with the place where Paul labored?
Can preachers today determine the will of God in such matters?

Paul's View of the Gospel

What is meant by Greeks and Barbarians?
Why was Paul a debtor to them?
How did he propose to pay his debts?
Discuss three reasons why we should not be ashamed of the gospel.
Why has the man who rejects the gospel no hope of salvation?
Whom does the gospel save?
What is the state of the unbeliever?
What is revealed in the gospel which makes it God's power to save?
What is the meaning of "from faith unto faith"?
What is meant by "the righteousness shall live by faith"?
What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson II—July 10, 1955

REDEMPTION IN CHRIST

Lesson Text

Rom. 3: 19-28

19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it speaketh to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be brought under the judgment of God:

20 Because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for through the law *cometh* the knowledge of sin.

21 But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

22 Even the righteousness of God through faith in Je'-sus Christ unto all them that believe; for there is no distinction;

23 For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God;

24 Being justified freely by his

grace through the redemption that is in Christ Je'-sus:

25 Whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood, to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God;

26 For the showing, I *say*, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Je'-sus.

27 Where then is the glorying? It is excluded. By what manner of law? of works? Nay: but by a law of faith.

28 We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

Daily Bible Readings

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"In whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins"* (Col. 1: 14.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—ROM. 3: 1-18.

July 4. M.....	Redemption Sent (Psalm 111: 1-9)
July 5. T.....	Redemption Looked For (Luke 2: 22-39)
July 6. W.....	Redemption Drawing Near (Luke 21: 20-28)
July 7. T.....	Redemption of the Body (Rom. 8: 1-23)
July 8. F.....	Redemption Through the Blood of Christ (Eph. 1: 1-7)
July 9. S.....	Sealed Unto the Day of Redemption (Eph. 4: 25-32)
July 10. S.....	To Obtain Eternal Redemption (Heb. 9: 1-12)

TIME.—A.D. 58

PLACES.—Corinth and Rome.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints at Rome.

Golden Text Explained

1. Redemption means forgiveness.

Redemption is a broader term and includes more than forgiveness of sins, but forgiveness is the prominent thing in the word and is what Paul had in mind when he wrote our text. Redemption implies a former bondage, and in its broadest meaning includes all that is necessary to release one from that bondage. But since our bondage to sin is self-inflicted by our rebellion against God and our love for the things of the world, God's forgiveness of our sins is spoken of as our redemption from sin. We must keep clear in our minds the difference between forgiveness of sins and the atonement for sin. Forgiveness is an act which takes place in the mind of the Father and cannot take place before the sin is committed. The atonement is the act of the Son, Jesus Christ, and had to take place, at least in the purpose of God, before the sin could be forgiven. The atonement through the death of Jesus Christ is the ground of the forgiveness through the mercy and grace of the Father. The death of Christ makes it possible for the Father to forgive sins without encouraging us in further violations of his law, without dishonoring his law, and without involving his moral government of the universe. Atonement has been made for all sins, but no sin is forgiven until the sinner has complied with the conditions named in the gospel for the forgiveness of his sins.

2. **Redemption is through the blood of Jesus Christ.** The word *redeem* means to regain by payment of price. The Lord redeems us from sin by the shedding of his blood as the price. The modernist has no place in his philosophy for the blood of

Christ. He looks upon Christ as being no more than an ordinary human being and his death as that of a martyr for his cause which only influences us to refrain from sin and make sacrifices for the same cause. But the Bible presents Jesus Christ as the sinless Son of God dying to make propitiation for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2: 2.) In order for the blood of Christ to effect our redemption it had (1) to be shed. "Apart from shedding of blood there is no remission." (Heb. 9: 22b.) Jesus said his blood was "poured out for many unto remission of sins." (Matt. 26: 28b.) Again we are told that he was "manifested to put away sin by the sacrifices of himself", and was "once offered to bear the sins of many." (Heb. 9: 26, 28.) Since the life is in the blood (Lev. 17: 11), the shedding of the blood was the giving of his life for the sins of the world. And in this sinless life of the Son of God is the efficacy to make propitiation for our sins. (2) This blood must be offered in order for it to benefit us. Under the law, where we have a picture of things in the gospel (Heb. 8: 5a), the blood of animals first had to be poured out and then offered in the most holy place. So the blood of Jesus would have been no benefit to us if, after it was poured out on Calvary, it had not been offered in heaven. So we are told that he went with his own blood into the tabernacle not made with hands, into heaven itself, that through the offering of his blood he might obtain eternal redemption for us. (Heb. 9: 11-15, 24.) Here again we must not take this word *blood* too literally and think that Jesus actually preserved a vessel of the literal liquid

which poured out of his body and presented that liquid on an altar in heaven before the Father. It was the value of the life which was in that blood which he offered to the Father to make propitiation for our sins. And on the basis of the value of that life in his blood he now makes intercession for us that the Father may forgive us of our sins. (Heb. 2: 17; 7: 25; 9: 24.) (3) This blood must be applied before our sins are forgiven. It is applied through faith, an obedient faith. Paul teaches that we are baptized into the death of Christ. (Rom. 6: 3.) It was in his death that he shed his blood, so when we are baptized into his death we reap the benefits, or blessings, which spring from his death and from his blood. Hence, when the penitent believer is baptized into the death of Christ, he applies the blood shed in that death to his own benefit.

3. Redemption is enjoyed in Christ.

Our text tells us that redemption, the forgiveness of sins, is to be enjoyed only in Jesus Christ. To be in Christ is to be in such relationship with him that he is our Saviour and we the saved, he is our Master and we are his servants. We then raise the question, How do we enter into this relationship or, how do we get into Christ? (1) Only a believer can get into Christ. Unbelievers have no place in that intimate relationship with Christ. (2) Only penitent believers can get into Christ. One who refused to repent of his sins is not fit to be in that intimate relationship where communion and fellowship are enjoyed with both the Father and the Son. (3) Only a penitent believer who has confessed his faith in Jesus as the Son of God can get into that relationship. One who refuses to confess Jesus as the Son of God will be denied by the Lord. (Matt. 10: 32, 33.) When one

asked to be baptized into that relationship, the inspired preacher required him to confess with his mouth the Lord Jesus. (Acts 8: 36-38.) And Paul teaches that such confession is "unto salvation." (Rom. 10: 9, 10.) (4) But the penitent believer who has confessed Jesus as Lord is not yet in Christ in spite of the fact that he is the only person on earth who can get into him. Paul says that one must be "baptized into Christ." (Rom. 6: 3; Gal. 3: 27.) To be baptized into Christ simply means to come by baptism into that relationship with Jesus Christ where he is our Saviour and we are the saved. To illustrate: One is initiated into the lodge. The word *lodge* is a noun denoting a relationship into which one may enter. The word *into* is a preposition denoting a passing from without to within something. The word *initiate* is a verb of action describing the action taken to pass from without to within the relationship. So that before the initiation one is outside of the lodge and not entitled to enjoy any of the blessings of that relationship; but after the initiation one is inside the relationship and entitled to all the favors in the relationship. Application: Baptized into Christ. The word *Christ* is a noun denoting a relationship to be entered. The word *into* denotes passing from without to within. The word *baptize* is a verb of action describing the action one must take to pass from without to within Christ. So that before baptism one is outside Christ and not entitled to the blessings said to be in Christ; but after baptism one is in Christ and entitled to all the blessing said to be in relationship with him. Redemption through his blood is in Christ. Therefore, all who wish to enjoy redemption through his blood must be baptized into Christ.

Exposition of the Text

I. The Purpose of Law (Rom. 3: 19, 20)

What things soever the law saith. In the first chapter of Romans Paul set out to prove that the Gentile world stood condemned before God on account of sin. In the second and third chapter, including verse 20, he proves that the Jews were in no better standing with God than the Gentiles. They had violated their law and were condemned. He

cited scripture from the Old Testament to prove those under law to be condemned. Since these scriptures came from the law of the Jew's, Paul affirmed it had reference to the Jews, for whatever the law said to the people who were under that law.

That every mouth may be stopped. This applies especially to the Jews, but in principle includes the Gentiles also. The Jews boasted of their connection with Abraham and of their

relationship to God as his people and they believed they were going to be saved on account of these things in spite of the way they lived. But their law said, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." Their law said, "There is none righteous, no not one." Again, their law said, "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them." (Gal. 3: 10; Deut. 27:

26.) Since they accepted these scriptures as their law and their law condemned all who violated it, their law tended to stop their mouths from their vain boasting.

May be brought under the judgement of God. Paul's full statement is that the law speaks (1) that every mouth may be stopped and (2) that all the world may be brought under the judgement of God. Did God through the law seek to bring the world under judgment, or condemnation? Did the evidence of the law bring some under condemnation who before were not under condemnation? The sense obviously is that the law spoke to make manifest the fact that all were under condemnation of God for their sins.

By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. In the expression "works of the law," there is no word in the Greek for *the*. So it is better to read the statement, "by works of law shall no flesh be justified." This is stated as a general principle. It includes the law of Moses as well as any other law. But some one is ready to ask, Is not the gospel the law of Christ? And to that we answer, Yes, it is the law of Christ. And then our inquirer wishes to know, Can we not be justified by the works of the gospel? And to this we reply, Certainly not; we are not justified on the ground of our perfect obedience to the law of Christ. Law says, Do this and live; fail to do this and die. Law knows no grace, no forgiveness. Man in his state of depravity does not live in perfect obedience to any law, hence by no law can man find justification. This does not mean that one can be justified by grace through faith refusing to be submissive to the law under which he lives, but it does mean that if his justification depends upon his perfect obedience to the law under which he lives he is hopelessly lost.

Through the law cometh the knowledge of sin. Paul has pointed

out two purposes of the law under which the Jews lived. First, it was to stop the mouth of proud boasting Jews and make them realize that they were under the same condemnation as the Gentiles; and second, it brings a knowledge of sin. The law does not create sin; it defines sin. The law does not make criminals; it identifies the criminals. Some people say the prohibition law made a lot of criminals. The truth is it did not make a single criminal, but it did identify and point out a lot of people who were criminal at heart. Paul says, "I had not known sin, except through the law: for I had not known coveting, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." (Rom. 7: 7.) The law did not cause Paul to covet; it simply pointed out to him the fact that his covetousness was a sin. Through the law we learn what is displeasing to God, the doing of which is sin; and through the law we learn what is pleasing to God, the doing of which is righteousness.

II. Justification By Grace Through Faith (Rom. 3: 21-24)

But now apart from the law. Paul has just affirmed that no one can be justified by the works of law, so he now sets out to show that there is a righteousness, justification, which may be had "apart from the law." To the Jew this was a blow at the law in which he had so much pride and put so much trust. This expression, "the righteousness of God," must not be taken as meaning the attribute of God, but as righteousness which is from God as its source. And the word "righteousness" is to be taken in the sense of justification. So Paul affirms that there has been manifested, or revealed, a justification from God which is separate from, or is not realized through keeping, the law. Since no one could be justified through keeping the law (verse 20), it follows that if any are ever justified they must be justified through something besides the law.

Witnessed by the law and the prophets. This statement was necessary for the benefit of the Jews. If they could be convinced that their law and prophets spoke of this manner of justification, they would be more likely to accept it. This does not mean that the law and prophets described, or set forth the terms of,

this justification apart from the law; it simply means that they give proof that people can be justified apart from the law. Abraham was justified by faith hundreds of years before their law was given, and prophets foretold such a system as seen in Rom. 1: 17b.

Righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Keep in mind that this is the righteousness, or justification, which is from God. Now Paul goes a step further and says that this justification, which, is apart from the law, cannot be obtained through keeping the law of Moses, is through faith in Jesus Christ. By this he simply means that it can be obtained and enjoyed, not through law, but through faith in Christ.

Unto all them that believe. This phrase is closely associated with the word "manifested" in verse 21. The meaning is that a justification which is from God and through faith in Jesus Christ has been manifested, revealed, for the benefit of all who will believe.

For there is no distinction. God is no respecter of persons, and he will not save Jews in preference to Gentiles; he will not save one color in preference to another. Neither do social and financial conditions have anything to do with the conditions of our salvation. Since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, all must be saved alike. Since none can be saved through the works of the law, it follows that all must accept this justification which is from God through Jesus Christ, or be lost.

Being justified freely by his grace. The believer is the subject of the verb in this phrase; it is the believer who is being justified. The word "freely" does not mean abundantly, though our justification might be said to be abundant in the sense that it takes care of all our sins regardless of how many and how serious they are. But it means that we are getting something we do not deserve; it is a free gift from God. And the next phrase tells us that this free gift is the proof of his grace, or favor, toward us. We are justified by grace, not by works. (Tit. 3: 4-7.)

Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The word "redemption" in our text is from a Greek word which means "to release on payment of the ransom price." Jesus paid the ransom price for our re-

lease from sin and its eternal consequences, and that is the reason this redemption is said to be in Christ Jesus; it is through his payment of the ransom price by him. When man sinned, he forfeited his life and exposed himself to eternal punishment. Jesus gave his life in the place of the life of the sinner, so his life given on the cross became the ransom payment. This ransom is made available to us on the condition that we believe in Jesus Christ, not with mere mental assent to the truth concerning him, but by an active obedient belief. McGarvey sums up the teaching of the last two verses as follows: "The apostle adds four additional details, viz.: 1. This justification is conditional, being obtained through faith in Jesus Christ. 2. It is bestowed upon Jew and Gentile without distinction, for both classes, having failed to attain that perfection of righteousness and character which is the glory of God, are equally condemned without it. 3. It is a free gift, bestowed by God's grace or favor. 4. It is obtained as a redemption by the giving of Jesus Christ as a ransom. (1 Cor. 6: 30.)" (Standard Bible Commentary.)

III. Justification Made Possible By the Blood of Christ (Rom. 3: 25-28)

Whom God set forth to be a propitiation. The words "set forth" mean to put into view, so show openly, so that all may see. The word "propitiation" is from an adjective but seems to be used here as a noun. It is possible that Paul expects us to supply the noun. Instead of that, our translators have supplied the verb, *to be*, as indicated by italics in the text. This form of the word occurs only one other time in the New Testament, in Heb. 9: 5, where it is translated "mercy-seat." Though the form of the statement is a bit difficult, the meaning is clear enough. Jesus was set forth as an atoning sacrifice to make it possible for God to justify the believer. One school of thought is that this atoning sacrifice was necessary to reconcile God to man. This use of *reconcile* is not common, and it conveys to many of us the wrong idea about God. When we think of one being reconciled to another, we think that one had the wrong attitude toward the other. God has always loved humanity in spite of our sin and rebellion. But, in spite of the fact that God loved

us, he could not forgive us and associate, or fellowship, us on account of our sins and uncleanness. So the atoning sacrifice of Jesus was for the purpose of making it possible for God to do what his love desired to do, but his justice and holiness could not allow⁷ him to do.

Through faith, in his blood. Jesus is the atoning sacrifice in his blood, and we reap the benefit through faith. Lard and some others, highly respected think Paul ties "in his blood" with "faith" and teaches us that we must have "faith in his blood" as the atoning sacrifice. But the punctuation of our text is against this view, and it seems best to view the person of Christ, who offered himself as an atoning sacrifice, as the object of our faith.

To *show his righteousness.* Here the word "righteousness" must be understood to indicate an attribute of God. God set forth Jesus to show, demonstrate, his retributive justice, which had not been fully demonstrated in his dealings with sin in the past.

Passing over of the sins done aforetime. God had been "passing over" (whatever that may mean) sins committed aforetime, that is, before the death of Jesus. On account of this passing over of sins, God's righteousness had not been discernible, or easily seen. So it was necessary to "set forth" Jesus as an atoning sacrifice so that all men could see God's righteousness in "passing over sins" committed before the death of Christ. This implies that God was righteous in "passing over" sins, but that his righteousness could not be seen without the sacrifice of Christ. Now, what does "passing over" mean? It cannot mean that he shut his eyes and held no one accountable for sin. (Heb. 2: 2; 10: 28.) The Authorized Version got the idea and translated the Greek word with our word remission. The Greek words for "remission" and "passing over" are kindred words, differing only in prepositional prefixes. The first means "sending away" in the sense of forgiving; the other means "passing over" in the sense of forgiving. When God forgave sins before the death of Christ, his righteousness was not easily seen, but after Christ was set forth as an atoning sacrifice, God's righteousness in forgiving sins before Christ could be seen. God never forgave any sin except through the

blood of Christ, for without the shedding of blood there is no remission. But he could forgive sins in view of the future shedding of that blood just as well as he can now forgive sins on account of the shedding of that blood in the past.

That he might himself be just. Without the atoning sacrifice of Christ, it would be impossible for God to forgive sins and remain just. Since it is impossible for God to be unjust, it follows that God could not forgive us our sins except upon the basis of Christ's death. But Paul goes a step further and says that God can be just only in forgiving the believers. Even if Jesus has died for all men, God cannot forgive one who does not believe in Jesus. If he were to do so, according to Paul, he would be unjust. From this verse we learn that God justifies the believer. There are two kinds of believers, the *obedient* and the *disobedient*. Does God justify the obedient or the disobedient believer? No one has ever read a verse which teaches, or remotely implies, that God will justify a disobedient believer, such as we read of in John 12: 42, 43; Acts 26: 27, 28. The obedience which a believer must render is to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. (Acts 2: 38.)

Where then is the glorying? The implication is that there is no ground for either Jew or Gentile to glory or boast. The ground for boasting is excluded, taken away. If one could be justified by obedience to law, he would have whereof to boast; but since we are justified by faith in the Christ who atoned for our sins, we have no reason to boast. It is not the law of works which excludes the boasting, but the law of faith which excludes boasting.

Justified by faith apart from the works of the law. This is the conclusion to which Paul comes, that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. To be justified by law means to merit justification on account of obedience, to merit salvation because of perfect obedience to law. This is the thing Paul says we cannot do. (Rom. 3: 20.) But does Paul affirm that a man is justified by faith apart from obedience to the commands of the gospel of Christ? There is a difference between obeying law with a view to meriting salvation and obeying

commands of the Lord as a manifestation of our faith in him and our submission to him. The former Paul says will not save, but the latter he affirms is essential to salvation. (Gal. 5: 6; 2 Thess. 1: 7-10.) As proof of the fact that one is justified by faith apart from the works of the

law, Paul goes on to show that Abraham was justified by faith hundreds of years before the law was given. Now that the law has been taken out of our way by the death of Christ (Rom. 10: 4; Col. 2: 14), we are justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

Lessons to Learn

1. Law served a good purpose in that it made men conscious of their sins and of their inability to save themselves from their sins. Through its sacrifices it pointed to a greater and more perfect sacrifice through which justification from sin should come.

2. Justification is made possible through the grace of God and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The grace of God in forgiveness is made possible to man by the atoning sacrifice

of Jesus Christ. Man's obedience is only a condition of justification, not the meritorious ground.

3. Justification by faith apart from works of the law is a gospel principle, but justification by faith apart from obedience to Christ is a false doctrine preached by practically all denominational bodies. We need to learn the difference between these two principles and be able to make others see the difference.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

What is the meaning of redemption in our text?

Can you distinguish between forgiveness of sin and atonement for sin?

If atonement has been made for all, why are not all people saved?

What is the modernistic view of the death of Christ?

What can you say of the necessity of Christ's shedding his blood?

What do you know about the importance of Christ offering his blood?

What is meant by applying the blood of Christ to our benefit?

What is meant by being in Christ?

Who can be baptized into Christ?

Can you show the necessity of being baptized into Christ?

The Purpose of the Law

What did Paul say about both Jew and Gentile?

How did the law stop the mouths of both Jews and Gentiles?

For what two reasons did Paul say the law speaks?

Did the law make people sinners or prove them to be sinners?

Why can man not find justification in doing works of law?

Are we to be justified on the ground of perfect obedience to the gospel of Christ?

How do we come to know what is sin?

Justification By Grace Through Faith

What is the meaning of the expression "righteousness of God"?

What connection was there between the law and the righteousness of God?

To what extent did the law witness the justification which is from God by faith?

Who can enjoy this justification which is from God?

Does any race or color of men have any advantage over others in justification?

What is meant by being justified freely; and what is the grace?

What is meant by redemption; and what is the ransom price?

On what condition is the ransom made available to us?

Justification Made Possible By the Blood of Christ

What is meant by setting forth Jesus?

What is the meaning of propitiation?

What is the effect of the propitiation upon God?

What is the object of our faith in this verse?

What is meant by God showing his righteousness?

What did God do when he "passed over" the sins of people?

Did God forgive sins of people before the cross?

Did God ever forgive sins except through the blood of Christ?

How is the justness of God involved in the forgiveness of sins?

What kind of believer does God justify?

By what law is glorying excluded?

Is justification apart from the law justification without obedience to Christ?

Whom does Paul use as proof of justification by faith apart from works of the law?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson III—July 17, 1955

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

Lesson Text

Rom. 5: 1-11

1 Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Je'-sus Christ;

2 Through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

3 And not only so, but we also rejoice in our tribulations: knowing that tribulation worketh stedfastness;

4 And stedfastness, approvedness; and approvedness, hope:

5 And hope putteth not to shame; because the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us.

6 For while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: for peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him.

10 For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled of God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life;

11 And not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Je'-sus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“As it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith.” (Rom. 1: 17.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—ROM. 4: 9-25.

Daily Bible Readings

July 11. M.....	Faith and Works (James 2: 14-26)
July 12. T.....	Living By Faith (Heb. 11: 24-28)
July 13. W.....	Law of Faith (Rom. 3: 21-31)
July 14. T.....	How to be Saved by Faith (Acts 16: 25-33)
July 15. F.....	Saved By Faith in Christ (Gal. 3: 26-29)
July 16. S.....	Salvation Not By Faith Only (James 2: 24-28)
July 17. S.....	No Justification by the Law (Gal. 3: 6-14)

TIME.—A.D. 58

PLACES.—Corinth and Rome.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints at Rome.

Golden Text Explained

1. **The meaning: of this text.** In our comments on this verse in Lesson I we took this verse to mean, Those justified by faith shall live. If one prefers to keep the word righteous in the statement, it would read, Those made righteous by faith shall live. The meaning of this statement is determined by the meaning given the preceding statement—“Therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith.” The word which determines the meaning of the whole statement is *righteousness*. This cannot refer to the moral excellence of God, for it is said to be a righteousness “from” or “out of” faith; it is a righteousness resulting from faith. God does not exercise faith, hence we cannot take the word to refer to

the moral excellence of God. Nor does it refer to the moral excellence of God imputed to man, for the doctrine of “imputed righteousness” is not taught in the Bible. Various forms of the Greek word here used are translated many times in the New Testament as *justify* and *justification*. Paul said that every one who believes is justified from all things from which they could not be justified through the law of Moses. (Acts 13: 39.) Another form of the same word is used in Rom. 5: 1 where we are said to be justified by faith. In Rom. 5: 18 we have two forms of the same word, and one is translated by the word *righteousness* and the other by the word *justification*. So we depend somewhat upon the sense of the

context as to whether we take the word to mean righteousness or justification. And if we translate the Greek word by use of our word righteousness, we still must determine whether it means the moral excellence of God or a state of being acceptable to God, which is nothing less than the state of being justified. In our text we believe it to mean justification. In the gospel is revealed a justification which is from God as its source and upon, or on account of, faith as its condition. If that be the form of the meaning in the first phrase in verse 17, that must be the meaning of a slightly different form of the word in the last phrase of the same verse. So we conclude that Paul is saying in our text: Those who are made just by faith shall live.

2. Justification by faith does not mean: (a) That we are justified by the sole act of believing in Jesus Christ. "Justification by faith only" is a favorite doctrine of the religious world, but it is not taught in the Bible. The very opposite of that is taught. (James 2: 24.) Paul is affirming justification by faith, the system of faith revealed in the gospel, as opposed to justification by works of the law as believed and taught by the Jews. If we are justified by the sole act of believing in Jesus Christ, we are justified, saved, without repenting of our sins. The Jews believed in Jesus, but would not confess him. (John 12: 42, 43.) Agrippa believed, but would not repent. From these examples we are forced to conclude that one cannot be justified, saved, as a result of the sole act of believing in Jesus. (b) Nor does the statement mean that we are justified so that we can never become unacceptable to God. Those who hold to the doctrines of John Calvin think when one is justified, made acceptable to God, he can never so sin as to become unacceptable to God. They hold that justification is an eternal act on the part of God so that when one becomes justified he can never be condemned, no matter what he does or how he lives. Justification simply means release from the guilt and punishment of the sins of which one is guilty at the time of justification; it does not reach into the future and release one from the guilt and punishment of all the sins he may commit in the future.

3. When is the believer justified?

(a) Notice that it is the believer

who is justified. Belief comes first, and then as a result of the belief justification comes. The unbeliever is condemned (John 3: 17, 18), but the believer is justified. But this does not tell us when or how the believer is justified. James says justification is not by faith only, so we look for something more to be involved, some other act of man as the point when the believer is justified. (b) The impenitent believer is not justified. (Acts 26: 27, 28.) That belief precedes repentance is evident from the fact that Peter told believers to repent. (Acts 2: 37, 38.) If one is justified by faith only, he is justified without repentance. If one is justified at the point of faith, he is justified before he repents, (c) The believer who refuses, or is ashamed, to confess his faith in Jesus is not justified. (John 12: 42, 43.) If we are justified by faith only, there will be a lot of people in heaven who are ashamed to confess Jesus, (d) The unbaptized believer is not justified. Paul teaches that we are baptized into death to sin. (Rom. 6: 3, 4.) Then he says, "For he that hath died is justified from sin." (Rom. 6: 7.) If we are baptized into death to sin, and if only the dead to sin are justified, it follows that we are baptized into justification, or release from sin. When one becomes dead to sin, that one is justified from sin. When the slave dies physically, he is released from the dominion of his master. So when we die to sin, we are released from the dominion of sin. Justification is release from the guilt and dominion of sin. Death to sin and justification from sin mean the same thing. So since we are baptized into death to sin, we are baptized into justification from sin.

4. Paul says those justified by faith shall live. Those who try to be justified by law are under the curse of the law. (Gal. 3: 8-12.) Justification by law requires perfection. No human being is perfect, so no human being can be justified by the law. Justification by faith requires trust and reliance upon Jesus Christ manifested through obedience to his commandments. Justification does not depend upon perfect obedience to Jesus Christ, for none is capable of rendering perfect obedience. But even the weakest is capable of continued faithfulness, however falter-

ing and stumbling he may be. So we can see why Paul says those who are justified by faith shall live. Those who try to be justified by law are condemned by that law; those who are justified by faith live because of the faith they have in Jesus Christ.

Those who try to be justified by the law are severed from Christ and fallen from grace. (Gal. 5: 2-4.) They that are justified by faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham, and they live because Christ lives in them. (Gal. 2: 20; 3: 9.)

Exposition of the Text

I. Fruits of Justification By Faith

(Rom. 5: 1-5)

Being therefore justified by faith. Justification by faith instead of the works of the law has been Paul's theme through the first four chapters of Romans. He first proved that all the world stood condemned before God on account of sin. Next, he set forth Jesus in his death as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. Then he showed that we are entitled to the benefits of that atoning sacrifice through faith and not through works of the law. As the crowning proof of this last point, Paul offered the justification of Abraham by faith four hundred years before the law was given. No Jew would dare deny that Abraham was justified, and yet every one had to admit that he was justified before the law was given; therefore, he must have been justified by faith apart from the works of the law. He now proceeds to show some fruits of justification.

We have peace with God. Paul teaches that we are alienated from God as long as we live in sin. (Col. 1: 21.) Justification is forgiveness of sins. Since we are no longer in sin, we are no longer alienated from God, no longer the enemies of God; hence, we have peace with God. Then Paul goes on to say that this peace with God has come to us through Jesus Christ who is our Lord. Through his death we are reconciled to God. We are made nigh in the blood of Christ. (Eph. 2: 13.) We are reconciled to God through the cross. (Eph. 2: 16; Col. 1: 20.) If we have peace with God through the cross of Christ, where does the "good (?) moral man" stand? How can he hope to find peace with God while rejecting Jesus Christ, who is our only avenue of access and approach to God? (John 14: 6; Eph. 2: 18.) We should notice that this is *peace with God*, not peace with the world and freedom from sorrow and suffering, which we are said to have through Jesus our Lord. Our sins are forgiven, we are recon-

ciled to God, and we are growing to love him and all heavenly things more day by day.

Access by faith into this grace. In this verse Paul declares that it is through Christ we all have our access into the favor of God. The word grace means favor of God. Access means a door of entrance. Jesus taught that he is the way to the Father. (John 14: 6.) He is our only means of approach to God. (Eph. 2: 18; 3: 12; Col. 3: 17; Heb. 13: 15.) So the one who rejects Jesus as the atoning sacrifice for his sins has no way or avenue of entering into the favor of God. He is still the enemy of God. God reconciles people to himself through Christ. (2 Cor. 5: 18.) Since only those who are reconciled to God enjoy the favor of God, and since only those in Christ are reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5: 19), it follows that they are the only ones who have peace with God and have access into the favor of God. So justification bears the fruit of peace with God and access into his favor. But it should be noticed that we have this access to the favor of God *by faith*. Again, the question comes, Does Paul mean by faith only? If so, we do not have to repent or confess our faith in Christ. Of course, Paul means that we have this access to the favor of God by an active, obedient, faith. Since this favor of peace, reconciliation with God, is enjoyed in Christ (2 Cor. 5: 19), and we are baptized into Christ (Rom. 6: 3), we conclude that only those who are baptized into Christ have access into the grace of God by faith.

We rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Hope is composed of *expectation* and *desire*. We do not hope for that which we have. (Rom. 8: 24, 25.) Since we hope for the glory of God, and we do not hope for what we now possess, it follows that we do not possess in this life what is included in the glory of God. This glory is called the "glory of God" because it is from God, it has its source in him. It is a glory which

we shall enjoy in heaven. Paul says we rejoice now in the hope, anticipation, of the enjoyment of that glory which God shall give us when we are glorified with Christ. This rejoicing in hope of glory should sweeten our sorrows, lighten our burdens, and make smooth the rough pathways of life.

We also rejoice in our tribulations. Looking to the enjoyment of the glory, we can rejoice, or glory, in our tribulations here. Moses "looked unto the recompense of reward" and "endured as seeing him who is invisible." (Heb. 11: 26, 27.) Paul says our sufferings here are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed hereafter. (Rom. 8: 18.) Being at peace with God and hoping for glory hereafter make us rather insensible to sorrow and suffering here. Furthermore, we can rejoice in tribulations because they are actually good for us—they work steadfastness in us. Tribulation tends to embitter people who are not trusting in God, but the child of God sees the chastening and refining, hand of God in tribulations (Heb. 12: 7-11), and he becomes more submissive to God on account of them. He becomes more determined to live for God to show his appreciation of God's goodness and mercy in forgiving him and adopting him into his family. This makes him more steadfast in his faith and life.

Stedfastness, approvedness. The verb *worketh* in the last phrase is understood here. When one has patiently borne tribulation, he has gone through a testing, and comes out confident in his security and approved both in the sight of men and of God. James tells us that the "crown of life" is given to them who have endured trials and have been approved. (James 1: 12.) And Paul continues our text by saying that approvedness works hope. This suggests that the approvedness is in us and that seeing we are approved we gain greater hope of eternal life. By bearing patiently the trials of life, we see that we are approved, and that gives us greater ground for hope. And this hope will not make us ashamed. Hope not finally realized causes one to be ashamed. But this hope we have will not make ashamed, so it is well grounded and will finally be realized.

Love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts. The phrase "love of

God" may mean either our love for him, or his love for us. Here it means the latter. This is given as the reason why hope does not make ashamed. The love God has for his children assures us that our hopes shall be fulfilled, or realized. This love has filled our hearts, or has been poured forth so abundantly in our hearts that it constitutes a ground for our hope.

Through the Holy Spirit. Paul says here we have been made conscious of God's love for us through the agency of the Holy Spirit which is given to us. He tells us that the body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in the Christian. (1 Cor. 6: 19.) Peter says God gives the Spirit to them that obey him. (Acts 5: 32.) And we learn that the obedience we must render to receive the Spirit is to believe the gospel, repent, and be baptized for the remission of our sins. (Acts 2: 38.) And God gives us the Spirit because we are sons. (Gal. 4: 6.) How the Holy Spirit shed "abroad in our hearts" the love of God we do not know, except that he does it by means of the knowledge of God's word. To what extent the Spirit is active, how he uses the truth to shed abroad the love of God, we do not know.

II. Death of Christ the Proof of God's Love (Rom. 5: 6-8)

While we were yet weak. The word translated *weak* is used of those who are made feeble by disease. This fact lends strength to its moral and spiritual significance. The human race had been enfeebled by the incurable disease of sin; they were helplessly lost in sin, unable to devise or execute a plan by which they could be saved from sin.

In due season, (a) It was the time set in the eternal purpose of God. Paul calls it "the fulness of the time" when God sent his Son to redeem them that were under the law. (Gal. 4: 4, 5.) (b) It was the time foretold by prophecy. Daniel foretold the time for the coming of the Messiah. (Dan. 9: 24-27.) Jesus said the time was fulfilled and the kingdom was at hand. (Mark 1: 15.)

(c) It was time when the world was ready for him. The Jews had been made ready by the law of Moses. (Gal. 3: 24-26), and by the work of John the Baptist (Luke 3: 3-6, 15). The Gentiles were ready in that they had learned they could not find God

through the philosophies of men and in that their language, government, and good roads made the spread of Christianity easier than at any previous time in the history of the world.

Christ died for the ungodly. It is true that Christ died for, *instead of*, the ungodly, but that is not the thought here. Paul means to tell us that Christ died *for the benefit* of the wicked, as we learn from the Greek preposition he used. Man was so weak he could not save himself, so Christ died in his behalf, for his benefit. Here Paul says Christ died for the ungodly, which he calls the weak. Since all were weak, all were ungodly and needed a Saviour because of their weakness and ungodliness.

Scarcely for a righteous man will one die. This verse is meant to impress us with the great love of God in giving his Son to die for the ungodly. Paul says it is difficult to find one who would die for a good, righteous man; no one would die for the wicked, though with difficulty one might be found who would die for a good person.

God commendeth his own love toward us. God did the very thing Paul says no man will do—he gave his Son to die for the ungodly. This is indisputable proof of a love beyond the love of man. When the Holy Spirit brings this message home to our hearts with convincing and convicting power through the gospel, we are made to love God because he first loved us. (1 John 4: 19.) This may throw some light on how the Holy Spirit sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts.

While we were yet sinners. In this division of our lesson Paul uses three words to describe the human family, (a) He uses the word *weak*, by which he means our inability to save ourselves, (b) He uses the word *ungodly*, by which he describes our character as being impious, without godly fear and reverence, (c) He uses the word *sinners*, by which he pictures our failure in life. The word sin suggests a failing to hit the target, to miss the mark. Humanity had missed the mark and had gone astray. So on account of our weakness, lack of reverence for God, and our failure to hit the mark at which we aimed Christ died for our benefit, in our behalf.

III. Children Have Greater Right to Hope (Rom. 5: 9-11)

Much more then . . . shall we be saved. If, while we were enemies of God, he loved us enough to give his Son to die for us, surely now that we are his friends he will love us enough to save us from the wrath which he is to pour out upon all the disobedient. This is one ground of the hope we have of glory mentioned in verse 5. We had no reasonable right to hope for such treatment when we were the enemies of God, but there is every reason to hope that God will be merciful to his obedient children since he has manifested so great love toward his enemies. Some have used this verse to prove "once in grace always in grace," or the impossibility of apostasy. But that doctrine declares that God will save his disobedient and rebellious children as well as his obedient children, which doctrine the scriptures nowhere affirm, but everywhere denies.

Being now justified by his blood. Justification by his blood simply means forgiveness of sins on account of, or on the ground of, his death for us, as the next verse proves. The worldly wise of our day who look upon Jesus as being nothing more than a man believe that his blood has no more power to atone for sin than the blood of any other good man. They disbelieve the doctrine of atonement through the blood of Jesus. But Paul affirms the doctrine all through his writings, especially in these first chapters of Romans.

From the wrath of God. Here is another doctrine which many religious people would like to take out of the Bible. The wrath of God is to be visited upon all who know not God and who obey not the gospel of his Son. (2 Thess. 1: 8-10.) There is a day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God when he will pour out his wrath, indignation, tribulation, and anguish upon the factious and disobedient. (Rom. 2: 4-11.) We are taught that his wrath will be manifested by turning the wicked into hell, a lake that burns with fire and brimstone, where they shall be punished forever. (Matt. 25: 41, 46; Rev. 20: 10, 15; 21: 8.) No wonder the Holy Spirit says, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. 10: 31.) And again, this salvation is said to be through Jesus

Christ. All who refuse to accept Christ on the terms of the gospel will be denied the salvation that is through him, purchased with his blood. The man who depends on his morals to save him will not have that salvation which is through Christ and purchased by his blood. He will have to endure the wrath of God.

We were reconciled to God through the death of his Son. Man is spoken of as being reconciled to God, but God is never said to be reconciled to man. However there were certain obstacles, hindrances, which made it impossible for God to forgive man of his sin. The death of Christ removed these hindrances and made it possible for God to forgive the believer and retain his character as a just and righteous ruler of the universe. (Rom. 3: 26.) To reconcile man to God means to turn him from enmity to friendship, from hating God to loving him. Paul says this was done through the death of Jesus for us. (Col. 1: 19-23.)

Shall we be saved by his life. Here again, as in verses 8 and 9, Paul reasons from the less to the more reasonable. If we, the enemies of God were reconciled by the death of his Son, surely we, the friends of God, will be saved by the life of Jesus. If dying for us he reconciled us, much more now living for us he will save us. This does not mean that his righteous life had as great a part in the atonement as his death. He now lives to intercede for us (Heb. 7: 25; 9: 24), and in this way are we saved by his life.

We also rejoice in God. The connection goes back to verses 2 and 3, where Paul says we (a) rejoice in the hope of the glory of God; (b) and we rejoice in tribulations. And now (c) we rejoice in God. We rejoice in the knowledge of God, of his goodness, love, and mercy toward us while we were sinners, that he spared us to learn the truth and obey his gospel to be saved. As his children, we now rejoice in the communion we have with God in worship, both private and public. We are not to find our pleasure in the world and the things of the world, but in God. "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice." (Phil. 4: 4.) Light entertainment is good in its place, but it is far from being the source of our joys, our pleasures. Some church leaders are going to excess at this point and striving to furnish social entertainment (some even at the expense of the church) to hold both young and middle-aged members. It will be better and far more scriptural to spend that effort in cultivating enjoyment of spiritual activities in the hearts of the membership; teach them to find their soul-satisfying pleasures in the Lord, in communion with him through work and worship.

Through whom we have now received the reconciliation. Our rejoicing is in God through Jesus, and it is through Jesus that we have received the reconciliation which makes it possible for us to rejoice in God. If we had not been reconciled to God through Jesus, we would not be in position or of inclination to rejoice in God.

Lessons to Learn

1. Peace with God is the greatest blessing we have through Christ, since it makes possible all other blessings. Regardless of how many blessings God has for men, none can enjoy them who are not at peace with him.
2. Love that dies for its enemies is beyond us, but from it we learn to love our enemies and do good to them. If Jesus was willing to die for his enemies, we should be willing

to spend our lives trying to take the story of his death to his enemies that they may be reconciled to God.

3. God does not hate any man and does not wish to pour out his wrath upon any one. He gave his Son to die for man so that man may escape that wrath. But if man continues in disobedience in spite of God's love manifested in Jesus, God's justice will demand that man suffer the wrath of God.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?
Repeat the golden text from memory.
Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

What is the meaning of the word righteousness in our text?

Why does it not mean the moral excellence of God?

What then is the meaning of our text?

Can you show that justification is not by faith only?

Can you show that one who is justified now may not be justified later?

How do the believer and unbeliever differ in their standing before God?
 Name and discuss three types of believers who are not justified before God.
 Why can people not be justified by law?
 What becomes of all who try?
 Why can those who are justified by faith live?

Fruits of Justification by Faith

State three lessons Paul has taught in previous chapters of Romans.
 What proof did Paul give that we can be justified by faith apart from works of the law?
 Why are people enemies of God?
 What is mentioned as the first fruit of justification?
 How does this peace come from God through Christ?
 Does peace with God also give us peace with the world and freedom from suffering?
 Into what do we have access by faith?
 Who are entitled to enjoy access into the favor of God?
 What kind of faith admits us into the favor of God?
 What is meant by the glory of God?
 Do we not possess it? Why?
 What makes us able to rejoice in tribulations?
 What does tribulation do for us? How?
 What blessing is derived from steadfastness?
 What has been shed abroad in our hearts? By whom?
 Where does the Holy Spirit dwell? Upon what conditions?

Death of Christ Proof of God's Love
 What is the meaning of the word weak in our text?
 Why and in what way was the time of Christ's birth the due season?
 What is meant by Christ dying for the ungodly?
 How does God commend his love toward us?
 What is unusual about this?
 Name and discuss three terms used to describe the human family.

Children Have Greater Right to Hope

What is the ground of Paul's hope that we shall be saved?
 This is the ground of hope for salvation of what kind of believer?
 What is meant by being justified by the blood of Christ?
 Upon whom is the wrath of God to be visited?
 When is the wrath of God to be poured out upon the wicked?
 How will the wrath of God be manifested in that day?
 How are we reconciled to God?
 Is God reconciled to us?
 What effect does reconciliation have upon man?
 How are we saved by the life of Christ?
 In what three things are we said to rejoice?
 What is meant by rejoicing in God?
 Discuss the relative values of rejoicing in God and in light entertainment.
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson IV—July 24, 1955

BURIED WITH CHRIST

Lesson Text

Rom. 6: 1-11

1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?
 2 God forbid. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?
 3 Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Je-sus were baptized into his death?
 4 We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life.
 5 For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection;

6 Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin;
 7 For he that hath died is justified from sin.
 8 But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him;
 9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death no more hath dominion over him.
 10 For the death that he died, he died unto sin once: but the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God.
 11 Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Je-sus.

Golden Text.—*"Having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead"* (Col. 2: 12.)

Devotional Reading.—Acts 8: 26-40.

Daily Bible Readings

July 18. M.....Baptism Commanded (Matt. 28: 18-20)
 July 19. T.....Baptism in Water (1 Pet. 1: 19-22)

July 20. W.....	Conversion of the Eunuch (Acts 8: 26-40)
July 21. T.....	Baptism Essential to Salvation (Acts 2: 38; 22: 16)
July 22. F.....	Must Obey the Commandments (1 John 2: 1-4)
July 23. S.....	The Baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3: 13-17)
July 24. S.....	Pharisees Opposed Baptism (Luke 7: 29-35)

TIME.—A.D. 58

PLACES.—Corinth and Rome.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints at Rome.

Golden Text Explained

1. The form of baptism. Why there should ever have been any argument over the form of baptism is difficult to understand. Space forbids an extended treatment of the subject, but the reader is entitled to some information in a form which can be used to teach others the truth on the subject, (a) The meaning of the word demands immersion and forbids sprinkling or pouring. The Greek words *baptizo* (verb), *baptisma* (noun) demand the immersion of the whole body. There is not a recognized Greek lexicon on earth which defines these words in such manner as to justify anything but immersion. For the definitions of thirty-three standard lexicons see "Handbook on Baptism," by Shepherd, published by the Gospel Advocate Company. If the word used by the writers of the New Testament means immersion, one has not obeyed the commandment of the Lord until that one has been immersed. The substitution of some other act for that which the Lord commanded will not be accepted by the Lord as obedience. So that one who has not been immersed has not obeyed the Lord, (b) The testimony of the "fathers," men who lived near the time of the apostles, agrees that immersion was the universal practice of the church of the first century. Barnabas, Chrysostom, Cyprian, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, and Tertullian, all dating prior to A.D. 250, are on record as teaching immersion as the act of baptism. The Catholic Dictionary says, "In apostolic times the body of the baptized person was immersed, for St. Paul looks on this immersion as typifying burial with Christ, and speaks of baptism as a bath." (Handbook on Baptism, p. 193.) (c) Historians and commentators of all denominations, almost without exception, state that immersion was apostolic practice. In Shepherd's "Handbook on Baptism" there are literally scores of the best scholars of all denominations quoted on the subject,

and they all agree that the apostles immersed the believer, and that such was the general practice for several hundred years after the first century.

2. Significance of burial and resurrection. If the action of baptism is important, there should be some good reason for it, and our text suggests this reason. In verse 11 Paul had just said that we are circumcised with the circumcision of Christ, not that of the law, which is not made with hands, and consists in putting off the body of the flesh. This "body of the flesh" is the same as the "old man" of Col. 3: 9 and Eph. 4: 22. It is the sinful life and disposition characteristic of the unconverted. The circumcision of the old law was the cutting of a part of the **physical** body; the circumcision of Christ is the putting off of sin and a sinful life. In verse 13 Paul says the circumcision of Christ took place in us when we were forgiven of our sins. So under the new law the circumcision of Christ is simply the putting off, the forgiveness, of sins. Now, in our text Paul says this circumcision took place when the old man was buried with Christ in baptism. Instead of "having been buried," Alford translates, "when you were buried." The expression, "having been buried in baptism," is an explanation of the preceding statement concerning the circumcision of Christ which is not made with hands. Hence, the sense of the two statements is, We received the circumcision of Christ which consists in the forgiveness of our sins when **we** were buried with him in baptism. The same thought is continued in the third chapter of Colossians where Paul teaches that if we have been raised with Christ we should not set our minds upon the things of the earth, but upon the things of heaven; we should put off the old manner of life to which we died and put on the new manner of life into which we have been raised to walk. (Col. 3: 1-10.) So in our burial in baptism

we die to the old manner of life; he old sinful life has been cut off, the sins of the past are forgiven and forever put behind us. Then following the burial we are raised into a new life, raised from the dead. The resurrection of Christ was an essential link in the chain of evidence of his Sonship, his deity; it was an essential step in his work in our behalf, for he "was raised for our justification." (Rom. 4: 25.) So our resurrection with him in baptism is an essential part of union with him. We are raised to walk in newness of life. If we are never raised, we never walk in newness of life. Burial without a resurrection is an unfinished figure; it leaves one without hope. The hope of the disciples would have been forever crushed if Jesus had not been raised from the dead; so our resurrection in baptism gives us hope of union with Christ in the new life, so that it is no longer we that live, but Christ Jesus who lives in us. (Gal. 2: 20.) The dead have no union with the living Christ; only those who have been raised in baptism to walk in the newness of life can enjoy union with the living Christ.

3. The connection of baptism and faith. The faith of this text is somewhat limited. It is not faith in Christ, but in the working of God. God's great power is the object of this faith. Certainly one must have faith in

Jesus Christ as the Son of God before that one can be baptized into Christ, but that is not what Paul is teaching in this text. Our resurrection to union with the living Christ is made possible by our faith in the power of God to raise us up to such a union, or such a life with Christ. The power which raises us up as new creatures in Christ is that same power which raised Jesus from the dead. Paul told the Ephesians he wished them to know "the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places." (Eph. 1: 19, 20.) So in our text he tells us that we were raised from our burial in baptism into union with Christ through our faith in the working of God, or the power of God, which was exercised when he raised Jesus from the dead. We do not look to baptism to make a new creature of us, we look to God. Baptism has no power to make us new creatures, but the God who raised up Jesus from the dead has all the power necessary to make us new creatures. So our faith is in the power of God, not in baptism. This is a point we should make our denominational friends see and appreciate, since they think we place too much emphasis on the act and not enough upon God.

Exposition of the Text

I. Buried into Death to Sin. (Rom.

6: 1-4a.)

What shall we say then? Paul means to ask what is the conclusion from the foregoing statements. He had just said that where sin abounded grace did abound more exceedingly. Paul feared that some might misunderstand his teaching and conclude that, since grace abounds exceedingly when sin abounds, the logical thing to do is to continue in sin that we may continue to enjoy the abundance of the grace of God. But this would be a sinful misuse of his teaching. He was encouraging people to avail themselves of the grace of God through Christ regardless of the extent of their sins. No matter how black their sins, the grace of God could cleanse them and make them white as snow. No matter how far in sin they had gone, the grace of God could reach them and bring

them back to a life of righteousness

God forbid. This is not a translation of the Greek words Paul used "May it not be" is the literal translation. It is an emphatic negation of something abhorrent to one's sense of reverence and piety. To continue in sin on order that one might enjoy much of the grace of God was to Paul an unthinkable abuse of God's goodness.

We who died to sin. Paul refers to some experience of the Christian which he calls a death to sin. And he affirms that all who have had this experience should no longer live in sin. As physical death terminates our connection with the affairs of this world, so our death to sin terminates our connection with sin. We no longer live in that to which we die. We have died to sin; therefore we should no longer live in sin. In this verse he does not tell us how or when we die to

sin, but he does make it clear that death to sin is a termination of our connection with sin. And this answers his question which he thought some one might raise as to continuing in sin that grace might abound.

All we who were baptized into Christ Jesus. In this verse Paul asks if these Roman brethren did not know that when they were baptized into Christ they were also baptized into the death of Christ. He takes for granted that they knew they were baptized into Christ, but wishes to teach them a new thought—that they were baptized into his death. To be baptized into Christ is to come by baptism into union and fellowship with Christ. This being true, there can be no union with Christ before and without baptism. This agrees with the statement of Jesus when he commanded the apostles to baptize the taught “into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matt. 28: 19.) But what is meant by baptism into the death of Christ? (a) Christ died for our sins, that our sins might be forgiven. To be baptized into the death of Christ for our sins is to come by baptism into the benefits or blessings of his death, the forgiveness of sins, (b) But Jesus also died *unto* sin, which means that in death his former relationship with sin was severed, terminated. Before death he associated with sinners; after his death he appeared only to chosen witnesses, his disciples. Before his death he was subject to temptation, but not so after his death. His death *unto* sin severed his relationship with sin. Our baptism into his death *unto* sin means that we come by baptism into a termination of our relationship with sin. We die to sin only as we have fellowship with him in his death to sin. Our former relationship with sin is described as being the bondservant of sin. When that relationship is severed, we cease to be the bondservants, slaves,;.-f sin, and we become the bondservant of Christ.

We were buried therefore with him. Paul now tells us when and how we became dead to sin. Having fellowship with Christ in his death unto sin, we became dead to sin. So when we were buried with him in baptism into his death for sin, we were buried into our own death to sin. Here Paul says we are buried into death. What death? Certainly this

is not physical death. Nor is it death *in* sin. To be dead in sin is to be separated from God on account of sin. (Eph. 2: 1; Col. 1: 21; 2: 13.) The sinner in rebellion against God is dead in sin. So we are not baptized into that death. We can be baptized into but one death, and that is death to sin, separation from sin, termination of our relationship with sin. So, when one is buried with Christ in baptism, that one is buried into his death to sin. The idea that one becomes dead to sin when he believes and repents is not true; Paul taught no such doctrine in this chapter, nor in any other place known to the writer. But Paul does teach in this chapter that we are buried with Christ through baptism into our death to sin. If one still insists that the death in verse 4 is Christ's death the same as in verse 3, we have no great argument with him, though we believe the death in verse 4 is the death to sin of the believer. But since in baptism we become identified with Christ in his death, so that his death becomes our death in that it is counted in our behalf, it matters little whether the death of verse 4 is that of Christ or the believer. It still remains a fact that we are baptized into death to sin and become free from sin.

II. liaised to Walk in Newness of Life (Rom. 6: 4b-7)

Like as Christ was raised from the dead. This is an elliptical sentence, and the full statement would be: “That like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, *to live a new life*, so we also might walk in newness of life.” Christ died for sin and arose to live unto God; so we are buried into death to sin, and we rise to live unto God. This life which is unto God is a new life, different from the old life we lived unto sin. Buried into death to sin; raised into new life with Christ unto God.

Through the glory of the Father. Why does Paul say Christ was raised through the *glory* of the Father instead of the *power* of God? The word *glory* is a broader term than power. The glory of God is many times manifested in the exercise of his power. This was true in the resurrection of Christ. In the death of Jesus there was a seeming triumph of the powers of darkness and evil; the glory of God was for a time

dimmed. But in his resurrection the glory of God shone more brightly than ever.

If we have become united with him. The Authorized Version has the word *planted* instead of *united*. And many brethren have used the idea of planting to prove immersion as the act of baptism. However, the position is not well taken, and there is never any good reason for using a poor translation to prove the truth. To do so is to weaken the power of truth. The idea is that we have grown together into one with Christ; there is union between us and Christ in this matter.

In the likeness of his death. Mc-Garvey thinks this statement is made to answer a probable cavil of some objector who supposes that we might die to sin in baptism and still be under no obligation to live free from sin after baptism. To answer this cavil Paul says that the person who is united to Christ in the likeness of his death by being buried into death to sin will be morally certain to be united with Christ in his resurrection from that death to sin to live in holiness unto God. It should be noticed that Paul says we are united to Christ in (by) the likeness of his death. The phrase "likeness of his death" can refer to nothing except baptism. This being true, Paul says we are united to Christ by, or in, baptism.

Shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. That Paul said this to prove we are raised out of the waters of baptism is too limited. Paul is not trying to prove that baptism is performed by immersion, though the proof is implied in what he says. He is proving that those who have died to sin should no longer live therein. So he says, if we have become united with Christ in our burial into separation from sin, we should also be united with him in his resurrection to live unto God. Of course, we are not actually physically united with him in either his death or his resurrection; we are united with him in the *likeness* of his death and resurrection. That by which we are united with him is only a likeness of his death and his resurrection.

Our old man was crucified with him. Since in his death for sin Jesus was crucified, Paul uses the term with reference to our death to sin. The term "old man" refers to our former self. To make it mean the

physical, or outward, man as opposed to the spiritual, or inward, man is a mistake. It may be viewed as the former manner of life of the individual. The phrase "with him" suggests union and fellowship with Christ in his crucifixion. When the old man was baptized into the death of Christ, he was crucified with Christ; he became united with Christ in death so as to reap the benefits of Christ's death.

That the body of sin might be done away. This is the purpose for which the old man was crucified with Christ. Here the term "body of sin" is used in the place of "old man" in the former statement. The body is the instrument of sin in so many ways that it has been viewed as the seat of sin, and some have actually looked upon the fleshly body as being inherently sinful and unholy. But neither of these views is scriptural. The "body of sin" is simply the old unconverted, unregenerate, self which was the bondservant of sin. The phrase "might be done away" is the translation of one Greek word which Paul uses twenty-five times (Alford), but never in the sense of annihilation. One translation has the word *annulled* and another has rendered *inactive*. As crucifixion rendered the body of Jesus inactive, so our crucifixion with him renders the old man, the unconverted personality, inactive. And the new man, the converted personality, is raised in the place of the old man to live a new life just as Jesus was raised to live unto God. And this idea is suggested in the following statement of Paul, "that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin."

For he that hath died is justified from sin. This statement is both an illustration and application of what was said in verse 6. It is another one of those short sentences of Paul in which he uses the first member of the sentence to express an illustration and uses the second member to make the illustration and expects the reader to supply the missing portions. In full the sentence would read, "As a man who has actually died is acquitted of the charges and released from prison, so the old man who was crucified with Christ is justified, forgiven, and released from the bondage of sin." But we should notice that justification takes place at the point of death to sin; the moment one becomes dead to sin, that moment

one is justified from sin. If one becomes dead to sin by faith and repentance and before baptism, it follows that one is justified from sin before baptism. But Paul teaches that one becomes dead to sin when he is baptized into that death, so is justified from sin when he is buried by baptism into death.

III. Consequence of Burial with Christ

(Rom. 6: 8-11)

But if we died with Christ. Paul now moves a step forward in his argument to say that since we died with Christ we are obligated to live with, like, him. The statement "we shall also live with him" at first sight seems to indicate a future life, and some have interpreted it to mean that if we die with him here we shall live with him in heaven. The interpretation makes good sense, it is scriptural, but it not in line with the argument Paul is making. He is arguing that we are not to continue in sin that grace may abound. His first reason is that we have died to sin. Now he argues that having died with Christ we should also live with him. The word "should" is as good translation of the future tense as is the word "shall." It is the future of obligation. Christ lived a new life after his death and resurrection; we are to walk in newness of life, live unto God the same as he, after our death to sin and our resurrection from that death.

Death no more hath dominion over him. Death had dominion over Christ only in the sense that he voluntarily submitted his body to death and the grave for the accomplishment of God's purposes to bring about the salvation of humanity. But since his resurrection death has no more dominion over him. Paul makes this statement to explain the kind of life we are to live with Christ, mentioned in the preceding verse. During his life he may be viewed as being under the dominion of death because his human nature was subject to death. But having died once and been raised up, he was no more subject to death. So we, having died unto sin and been raised from that death, should no longer be under the dominion of sin and so subject to another death to sin.

For *the death that he died.* This verse is explanatory of what was said before. He gathers us his thoughts and puts them into one clear

definite statement. When Jesus died, he died unto sin once for all, never to be subject to sin again; when he was raised from the dead to live again, that life was wholly unto God.

Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin. As Jesus died once for all time to sin, so we are to recognize our death with him to sin as final, once for all time, never to return to the dominion of sin and make necessary another death to sin. We must keep in mind a difference between the connection Jesus had with sin and the connection we have with it. Jesus was subject to temptation; he was constantly in the presence of sinners, eating often with publicans and sinners. But when he died to sin, even this connection with sin and subjection to it were severed and discontinued. It was in this sense that he died to sin. While we were the slaves of sin in the bondage of sin before we died to sin, when we died to sin this connection was terminated. And now Paul teaches us that we should live unto God with Christ so that the connection will never be renewed and make necessary another death to sin.

But alive unto God in Christ Jesus. Our experience in baptism is accepted by the Father as a literal death to sin and a resurrection to new life by virtue of our union and fellowship with Christ. We die unto sin and live unto God *in Christ Jesus*, by virtue of our union with him. We participate in the benefits of his death when we identify ourselves with him in that death by being baptized into his death; we participate in the benefits of his resurrection (Rom. 4: 25) when we identify ourselves with him in that resurrection by being raised from the grave of baptism to walk in newness of life. If Jesus had not died and risen again, our baptism would be meaningless and worthless. But since he died and rose again, our baptism is accepted by the Father as our death to sin and our resurrection to live unto him. If the religious world could be made to see and appreciate this connection between the death and resurrection of Jesus and our baptism, we would not have such difficulty in getting them to obey the Lord in baptism. And many members of the church have not seen this deeper significance of baptism and are not able to teach

their friends the real spiritual significance of the act. Each generation needs to make a new study of the

subject, so do not refuse to go to church when the preacher announces that he will preach on baptism.

Lessons to Learn

1. All spiritual blessings are in Christ (Eph. 1: 3), and we are baptized into Christ. So, if we wish to enjoy all spiritual blessings, we must be baptized into Christ. And this baptism is not Holy Spirit baptism, since it is a baptism in which we are said to be buried and raised.

2. Since we are buried by baptism into death to sin, it follows that we do not die to sin before we are baptized. We are buried into death to

sin, raised into life unto God. To die to sin simply means a termination of our relation to sin. So Paul teaches that we are baptized into the termination of our connection with sin.

3. Since those dead to sin are justified from sin, and we are baptized into death to sin, it follows that we are baptized into a state of justification. That is equal to saying that we are baptized unto the remission of our sins.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

What do you know of the meaning of the Greek words used for baptism?

What act is essential to obedience to the command to be baptized?

What do you know of the testimony of the early church "fathers"?

What do denominational historians and commentators say of the form of baptism?

Contrast the circumcision of the law and the circumcision of Christ.

What is the circumcision of Christ and when does it take place?

How does Paul express the same thought in the third chapter of Colossians?

What is the significance of our being raised in baptism?

What is the object of the faith in our text?

How was this working of God manifested in dealing with Christ?

Buried into Death to Sin

What abuse of his teaching does Paul seek to avoid in verse 1?

What figure does Paul use to prove that we should no longer live in sin?

What is meant by being baptized into Christ Jesus?

What is meant by being baptized into the death of Christ?

What change of relationship do we experience in that death to sin.

When does our death to sin take place?

What is the difference between "dead in sin" and "dead to sin"?

Why is the penitent believer not dead to sin?

Raised to Walk in Newness of Life

Whose example do we follow in being raised to walk in newness of life?

Why say that Christ was raised through the glory of the Father?

What is meant by being united with Christ in the likeness of his death?

What is the meaning of union with Christ in the likeness of his resurrection?

What is meant by our old man?

How was he crucified?

What is the body of sin?

How was it done away, or rendered inactive?

When is one justified from sin?

What does this have to do with the time when we become dead to sin?

Consequence of Burial with Christ

What is meant by living with Christ?

How did death have dominion over Christ?

When did death cease to have dominion over Christ?

What does this teach us with reference to our death to sin?

What is the difference between Christ's relationship to sin and our relationship to sin?

What is meant by our being dead unto sin in Christ Jesus?

What is meant by our living unto God in Christ Jesus?

Has this lesson increased your appreciation of baptism?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson V—July 31, 1955

THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT

Lesson Text

Rom. 8: 1-13

1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Je'-sus.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Je'-sus made me free from the law of sin and of death.

3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh. God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

4 That the ordinance of the law

might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

5 For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

6 For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace:

7 Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be:

8 And they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

9 But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any

man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

10 And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness.

11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Je'-sus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Je'-sus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

12 So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh:

13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye must die; but if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

Golden Text.—"Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." (Gal. 5: 16.)

Devotional Reading.—Gal. 5: 16-25.

Daily Bible Readings

July 25.	M.	Freedom Not to Serve the Flesh (Gal. 5: 13-18)
July 26.	T.	Born of the Spirit (John 3: 1-5)
July 27.	W.	Spirit of God's Son (Gal. 4: 1-11)
July 28.	T.	Sowing to the Flesh (Gal. 6: 6-10)
July 29.	F.	Spirit Maketh Intercession (Rom. 8: 26-29)
July 30.	S.	Deliverance in Christ (Rom. 7: 18-25)
July 31	S.	Sinful Passions (Rom. 7: 4-6)

Time.—A.D. 58.

Places.—Corinth and Rome.

Persons.—Paul and the saints at Rome.

Golden Text Explained

1. Duty to walk by the Spirit, (a) The word Spirit in our text means the Holy Spirit. Some have misunderstood this and think it means the regenerated human spirit. They make the word flesh mean the body and the word Spirit mean the human spirit and view these two as waging a warfare for control in the life of the Christian. But the word flesh in our lesson today cannot be limited so as to mean the physical body as opposed to the human spirit. If we so limit it, we have Paul saying to the Romans that they are not in the physical body. (Rom. 8: 9.) The word flesh in our lesson today means that carnal disposition in man which is opposed to God. Thayer's definition is, "When either expressly or tacitly opposed to the Spirit of God, has an ethical sense and denotes mere human nature, the earthly nature of man apart from divine influence, and therefore prone to sin and opposed to God" (b) The word walk in our text denotes action. It is often used to mean the life one lives.

Walking with God means to live a life of fellowship with God. Walking after God means living a life in harmony with the example and teaching of the Lord. So to walk by the Spirit simply means to order one's action, or conduct, in harmony with the teaching of the Holy Spirit; to live like the Holy Spirit directs people to live.

2. Warfare for supremacy. Our text suggests a warfare going on within us which is in other scriptures plainly affirmed. The Spirit is seeking to control us for our own good and for the glory of God. The flesh is seeking to control us for its pleasure and for our condemnation and destruction. Paul describes this warfare at length in Rom. 7: 15-25. McGarvey's comments on verses 18-20 will set the lesson before us. "I am not surprised that part of me rebels against God's law, for I know that in the fleshly part of my nature dwells no good thing. Sin dominates my flesh, so that none of the tendencies which come from that part of me in-

cite to righteousness, and the contrast between the spiritual and fleshly parts of me makes me painfully conscious of this fact; for on the spiritual side my power to wish, and to will to do right, is uncurbed and unlimited, but when I come to use the fleshly part to execute my will, here I encounter trouble, and feel my limitation; for I find myself hindered by the flesh, and unable, because of it, to perform the right which I have willed and wished. Yea, it is not in willing, but in this matter of performance, that I fail to keep the law; for though I wish to do good, I cannot compass it, and though I do not wish to do evil my fleshly nature constrains me to it even against my wish. . . . So then, I say again that I, in my own conscience, endorse the goodness of the law, for my spiritual nature wishes to perform its dictates, and only fails to do so because overborne by my fleshly nature, which sin has such power to influence. I find it then to be the rule of life, regulating my conduct, that though I always want to do good, evil is ever present with me, because I am in the flesh, which is never without evil influences. The presence of the flesh is the presence of evil, and since I cannot rid myself of the one, neither can I of the other." Some have thought to deny the existence of this struggle, warfare, going on in us by saying that Paul was describing his condition under the law of Moses and that he later affirms that he is delivered from such warfare in Christ under the gospel. It is true that he raises the question as to who will deliver him from such and immediately gives thanks to God for the prospect of deliverance through Jesus Christ. (Rom. 7: 24, 25.) But he does not affirm that he has present deliverance from such a struggle. And every Christian who has examined himself closely must admit that Paul's description of the struggle going on within between right and wrong fits us perfectly. We do things of which we do not approve, things we hate, only because of the desires of the fleshly nature we have not yet fully subjugated and which we can never completely destroy to the point of living in sinless perfection as long as we are in the body.

3. Consequences of walking by the Spirit, (a) Freedom from lusts. Paul

says that if we walk by the Spirit we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. We have stated above that we will never be perfectly free from influences of the fleshly nature as long as we are in the body. Is this a contradiction to this thought of freedom from lusts? Not at all, for we will never walk by the Spirit to absolute perfection. Hence, we may say that, to the extent we walk by the Spirit, to that extent we will be free from the lusts of the flesh. The Spirit says we are not to steal, and walking by the law of the Spirit will cause us to refrain from stealing, even from covetousness which causes one to steal. The Spirit teaches us not to commit adultery, so if we walk by the Spirit, we will refrain from adultery, even from lust which must exist in the heart before the overt act is performed. The Spirit teaches us how to worship God, and if we walk by the Spirit, we will worship him according to the teaching of the Spirit. But there is in man a desire to do things according to his own wisdom to satisfy his longing for pomp and show. Here is that warfare Paul mentioned going on among his members. The fleshly nature is striving for satisfaction in pomp and ceremony while the Spirit is trying to lead us in the Lord's way. To the extent we follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in the matter of worship, to that extent we will not fulfill the desires of the flesh to revel in pomp and ceremony which are so satisfying to worldly pride and ambition. The principle is capable of many other applications, but these are enough to show that walking by the Spirit frees us from lusts,

(b) Freedom from restraint of law. Paul says that, if we are led by the Spirit, we are not under law. (Gal. 5: 18.) To be led by the Spirit is the same as walking by the Spirit. If we could be led, or walk, perfectly by the Spirit, we would feel absolutely no restraint of law of any kind, we would not even feel the restraint of gospel commandments. To be led perfectly by the Spirit is to make the will of the Spirit, the will of God, our own will; it is to desire to do everything God wishes us to do and refrain from everything we should not do. If that were our intense desire, we will not have to be commanded to do good, for we would wish only to do good; we would not have to be restrained

by commandment to refrain from evil, for we would fervently wish to do no evil. So to the extent that

we are lead by the Spirit, to that extent we are free from the restraint of law.

Exposition of the Text

I. Walking After Spirit Brings Justification (Rom. 8: 1-4)

There is therefore now no condemnation. The word *therefore* suggests that this is a conclusion from arguments given before. The atoning sacrifice of Christ (chapter 3), our union with Christ in death to sin (chapter 6), and our assurance of deliverance through Christ from dominion of the flesh (chapter 7) all serve as the ground for the conclusion here stated that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. However, we must not think this affirms the sinlessness of those in Christ, or that God will not hold them responsible for the sins they commit. Verse 13, which we will study later, affirms that those in Christ who live after the flesh must die eternally. So we take Paul to mean that there is no need for condemnation of any in Christ; there is no reason why one in Christ should not be acceptable unto God.

For the law of the Spirit of life. This is given as the reason why there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ. This law of the Spirit of life makes us free from the law of sin and death. The Spirit of life is the Holy Spirit which gives life. Being God, a member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit is the source and giver of life, spiritual as well as physical. And the law of the Spirit is the gospel. If some object to our calling it a law, they are cited to the fact that inspired writers refer to the gospel as law. (James 1: 25; Gal. 6: 2.) The *law of sin and death* is the law of Moses, or any other law which exacts the death penalty for violation thereof. Any time we are under a law which exacts the death penalty for violation of its statutes we are just as sure to be condemned to death as we are under the law, for we cannot live under law without violating it. Having no atoning sacrifice, the law of Moses could not provide for the forgiveness of sins, so is called a law of death. (Acts 13: 39; 2 Cor. 3: 6, 7.)

For what the law could not do. Justification, forgiveness of sins, could not be had through the law of Moses because animal sacrifice provided therein was not able to

atone for sin. (Acts 13: 38, 39; Heb. 10: 4.) So God sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. He did not send him in sinful flesh, but in the likeness of sinful flesh. (Phil. 2: 7, 8, Heb. 2: 14, 15.) Next, God sent his Son for sin, for the purpose of expiating, removing, sin. The margin has "as an offering for sin." It was through this offering he made for sin that he frees us from the law of sin and death.

Condemned sin in the flesh. Sin in the flesh of Jesus was not condemned, for he had no sin. It is our sins which are condemned. And it was in sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin that God condemned the sins in us. Lard, Alford, and others take the position that the suffering of Christ has no connection with this condemnation; that only his sinless life proved that humanity is capable of rising above sin with the help of God, and therefore he in his sinlessness condemned the sins of which we are so often guilty. But, while that is included and undoubtedly is one way in which God condemned sin in us, his suffering on the cross is certainly included, for Paul says God not only sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, but he also *sent him for sin*, to make an offering for sin. And in making this offering for sin he condemned sin. The sacrifice of Christ on Calvary is a thundering condemnation of sin and the greatest restraining force known to us to keep us from sin.

Ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us. The word *ordinance* in our difficulty here. Some have *righteousness*, others *righteous requirement*, and still others *justification*. But for the weakness of human flesh the law would have brought justification. However, on account of this weakness, the law became a perfect instrument of condemnation. So God sent his Son that the ordinance, or righteous demands, of the law might be accomplished in us who walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. On account of human weakness the law could not accomplish justification, salvation, in humanity; but on account of the offering of the Son of God justification can be accomplished through the gospel in

spite of human weakness, if we walk after the Spirit. In this we see that our final salvation is conditioned upon our walking after the Spirit, thus forever silencing those who affirm the impossibility of apostasy.

II. Walking After Flesh Brings Death

(Rom. 8: 5-8)

They that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh. Some think Paul refers to people who have never obeyed the gospel when he speaks of those who are after the flesh. Certainly they are included, but it seems that the statement must be taken of any whether in Christ or out of Christ who walk after the flesh. The thing he says about them is that they mind, appreciate, enjoy the things of the flesh. While on the contrary those who walk after the Spirit mind, appreciate, and enjoy the things of the Spirit. Lard thinks the word spirit here means the human spirit, so that those who follow after the flesh fulfill the desires of the flesh, while those who follow after the spirit, inward man, live a holy life. But this seems to give too much importance to the human spirit in that it makes it the guide and standard by which we are to live.

The mind of the flesh is death. Death is the consequence of minding the flesh, or of following after and fulfilling the desires of the flesh. While if we mind, or follow after, the Spirit, we shall have life and peace. This, together with verse 4, suggests that one in Christ has a choice of the kind of life he will lead in Christ. If one in Christ takes the low road, lives after the flesh, a carnal life, he will be lost; but if he takes the high road, lives after the Spirit, a holy life, he will be saved. This position will be strengthened in the last section of the lesson.

The mind of the flesh is enmity against God. This is given as the reason why the minding of the flesh leads to eternal death. There is eternal enmity between the impurity and unholiness of the flesh and the purity and holiness of God. In the very nature of things there can be no reconciliation between the sinfulness of the flesh and the holiness of God. (2 Cor. 6: 14-18.)

For it is not subject to the law of God. The mind of the flesh is not subject, or obedient, to the law of God, the gospel. But the "mind of the flesh" is impersonal and is neither

obedient or disobedient, except as it is manifested in some person. So we say that one who has the mind of the flesh is at enmity with God, for he is not obedient to the law of God and, indeed, cannot be obedient as long as he maintains the mind of the flesh. He must first change his mind from that of the flesh to that of the Spirit before he can be reconciled to God and before he can be subject to the law of God.

They that are in the flesh cannot please God. These who are in the flesh are those who have the mind of the flesh, those who live after the flesh, fulfill the desires of the flesh. They cannot please God because such a disposition, such a manner of life, is enmity against God, is contrary to his nature and cannot be reconciled to him.

III. Assisted by the Indwelling Spirit

(Rom. 8: 9-11)

But ye are not in the flesh. Paul says the brethren at Rome were not in the flesh, not walking after the flesh and minding the things of the flesh, but they were in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwelt in them. To be "in the Spirit" means to be controlled by the Spirit. Those who are controlled by the Spirit are indwelt by the Spirit, for Paul affirmed that, if they were controlled by the Spirit, they were indwelt by him. The expression "Spirit of God" determines the meaning of the word Spirit in this whole connection.

If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. In verse 8 the term "Spirit of God" is used, while in this verse we have "Spirit of Christ." Some have supposed that "Spirit of Christ" means the disposition of Christ to be meek, lowly, humble, forgiving, etc., but since it is used to vary the term "Spirit of God" we know that it means the Holy Spirit. Peter says the Spirit was in the prophets, enabling them to foretell the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow. (1 Pet. 1: 10, 11.) Yet he says that the Holy Spirit guided holy men of old to speak of things to come. (2 Pet. 1: 21.) So there can be no doubt that the term "Spirit of Christ" in our text means the Holy Spirit. If one does not possess the Holy Spirit, that one does not belong to Christ by right of redemption. If someone asks when and how we come into possession of the Holy Spirit, we reply that

God gives the Spirit to them that obey him (Acts 5: 32), and that the obedience one must render to receive the Holy Spirit is to believe the gospel, repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins that he may receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2: 38.) The "gift of the Holy Spirit" in this verse simply means the Holy Spirit as a gift; he receives a gift consisting of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 10: 44 we learn that Cornelius received the Holy Spirit, but in verse 45 we find that the "gift of the Holy Spirit" was poured out upon him. The two expressions are used interchangeably. The gift of the Holy Spirit is a gift consisting of the Holy Spirit. That the Holy Spirit does dwell in us is affirmed by Paul. (1 Cor. 6: 19.)

The body is dead because of sin. This is the result of Christ, in the person of the Holy Spirit as his representative, dwelling in us. Paul speaks of the body being dead because it is doomed to death on account of Adam's sin. (Rom. 5: 12; 1 Cor. 15: 22.) And the human spirit is alive, destined to life, because of the righteousness of Christ. This latter is the result of Christ dwelling in us. The sense of the whole verse is, Though the body is doomed to death on account of Adam's sin, yet the spirit is destined to life because of the righteousness of Christ.

Shall give life also to your mortal bodies. If the Spirit of him, the Holy Spirit, that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you. This can have reference to nothing less than the final resurrection of our mortal bodies. God will give life to the mortal bodies, but there will be the change mentioned in 1 Cor. 15: 35-54, from corruption to incorruption, from mortality to immortality. But notice that God will use the Holy Spirit to accomplish this resurrection, the same Spirit that dwelleth in us. The connection seems to be that, if the resurrection of the body in the last day can be brought through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit, surely we can be given spiritual life and enabled to walk after the Spirit and gain the victory over the flesh in this life by the indwelling of that Spirit.

IV. Consequences and Blessings

(Rom. 8: 12, 13)

So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh. We are told that we are debtors, but left to supply the name of the one to whom we are in debt. However, we are told that we do not owe the flesh anything; we are under no obligation to the flesh to endanger our eternal welfare to satisfy its lusts. Notice that Paul addresses the brethren in this statement. If it were impossible for brethren, children of God, to live after the flesh, it would be unnecessary and ridiculous for Paul to so warn them.

If ye live after the flesh, ye must die. Again, the implication is that brethren can live after the flesh; they can do the works of the flesh. (Gal. 5: 19-21.) Paul warns us that, if we who are in Christ fail to follow the teaching of the Spirit and walk after the flesh, we must die. This death cannot be physical death, for, regardless of how men live, all must die the physical death. (Heb. 9:

27.) To say that this is physical death would be to affirm that all men have lived after the flesh, and, according to Gal. 5: 21, none have entered the kingdom of heaven, the eternal kingdom. It must be the second death in the lake of fire and brimstone. (Rev. 21: 8.) So Paul teaches that brethren can live after the flesh and finally perish in the lake of fire.

If by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body. The job of putting to death the deeds of the body is ours. Paul says, "And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof." (Gal. 5: 24.) Here again Paul plainly makes it our duty to do the crucifying of the flesh. However, we are assured of divine assistance, for it is "by the Spirit" that we put to death the deeds of the body. We are "strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man." (Eph. 3: 16.) This assistance cannot be perceived through the physical senses, so we have no physical evidence of his help. On this point McGarvey says, "The testimony of Christian experience is that the aid of the Holy Spirit, though real and effectual, is not so obtrusive as to enable the one aided to take sensible notice of it. To all appearance and sensation the victory over the flesh is entirely the Christian's own,

and he recognizes the aid of the Spirit, not because his burdens are sensibly lightened, but because of the fact that in his efforts to do right he now succeeds where lately he failed. The success, moreover, though habitual, is not invariable, for invariable victory over temptation breeds self-consciousness and self-righteousness, and other sins perhaps more dangerous than the ordinary lusts of the flesh." (Standard Commentary, p. 360.) Lard says, "Nevertheless the Holy Spirit will aid you. But this aid will all be tendered back out of sight. It will not be pushed out so as to come under the eye of consciousness. You will hence never be able to take any sensible notice of it. You will be conscious of the effort, and you will know the result. But you are *told* merely that you are aided. Hence the fact that you are so is matter of belief, not of knowledge." (Commentary on Romans, p. 263.)

Ye *shall live*. The brethren in Christ who live after the flesh shall

die, and that death is eternal. The brethren in Christ who put to death the deeds of the body and live after the Spirit shall live, and this life must be eternal. However, it is not this earth life, for there is no such thing as eternal life on earth. So Paul says that we gain eternal life in heaven by putting to death the deeds of the body and living after the Spirit. We do not earn eternal life; we do not pay for our salvation. But such a life in Christ is simply a condition of eternal life. This does not mean that eternal life is not a gift. Many religious teachers say that, since eternal life is a gift, there can be no conditions to meet. They think meeting conditions would be equal to paying for eternal life. Salvation from sin is promised upon the condition of faith, but no one thinks we pay for our salvation when we believe. So eternal salvation, eternal life in heaven, is offered upon the condition that we put to death the deeds of the body and live after the Spirit, but we do not by so doing pay God for eternal life.

Lessons to Learn

1. Of all the blessings enjoyed in Christ none can mean more to us than the fact that there is no condemnation in Christ. The condemnation peculiar to the law, condemnation without atonement, is not found in Christ.

2. The mind of the flesh is enmity against God, and those who follow the desires of the flesh can have no peace with God. Until their conscience is seared, they are constantly conscious of that lack of peace and calm which should characterize the child of God.

3. Our bodies are temples of the

Holy Spirit whom God gives to all who obey him. He lives in us as heaven's representative to strengthen our spirit and help us to put to death the deeds of the body, sanctifying and purifying us.

4. Our eternal destiny depends upon us. If we are willing to make the effort to put to death the deeds of the body, the Holy Spirit will give us the victory and eternal life as the reward; but if we are not willing to make the effort and are satisfied to drift along in the ways of the flesh, we shall die eternally.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

What is the meaning of the word Spirit in our text?

Can you define the word flesh as used in our text?

What is denoted by the word walk?

Why does the Spirit seek to control us?

Why the flesh?

Are you conscious of this warfare in your life?

Can you describe it?

To what extent may we become free from lusts?

Can you illustrate how walking by the Spirit frees us from lusts of the flesh?

Can you illustrate how walking by the Spirit frees us from restraint of law?

Walking After the Spirit Brings Justification

On what does Paul base his conclusion that there is no condemnation in Christ?

What is the law of the Spirit of life?

Why is he called the Spirit of life?

What is the law of sin and death?

Why is it so called?

What particular things could the law of Moses not do?

In what two ways did God condemn sin in us?

What is meant by the ordinance of the law?

How is it fulfilled in us?

In what class of people in Christ is the ordinance of the law fulfilled?

Walking After Flesh Brings Death

What is meant by minding the flesh?

Who do so?

What is minding the Spirit?

Who does that?
 What is the consequence of minding the flesh and the reward for minding the Spirit?
 What is the relationship between the mind of the flesh and God?
 What then is the condition of one who minds the flesh?
 What must such persons do in order to be pleasing to God?
 Assisted by the Indwelling Spirit
 What is meant by being in the flesh?
 What is meant by being in the Spirit?
 What is meant by the term "Spirit of Christ"?
 How do we come into possession of the Spirit of Christ?
 What is "the gift of the Holy Spirit" as used in our lesson?
 What proof do we have that the Holy Spirit dwells in our bodies?
 In what sense is the body dead because of sin?

In what sense is the spirit alive because of righteousness?
 Through what will God give life to our mortal bodies?
 Consequences and Blessings
 To what are the children of God not in debt?
 What is the consequence of living after the flesh?
 What is the death they must die?
 Does God put to death the deeds of our body for us?
 What part does the Spirit play in this work?
 How do we know he so works?
 What blessing comes to those who put to death the deeds of the body?
 What life is promised to those who walk after the Spirit?
 Does meeting the conditions of eternal life pay God for it?
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson VI—August 7, 1955

CHRISTIAN LIVING

Lesson Text

Rom. 12: 1-13

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service.*

2 And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

3 For I say, through the grace that was given me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but so to think as to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to each man a measure of faith.

4 For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office:

5 So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another.

6 And having gifts differing according to the grace that was given

to us, whether prophecy, *let as prophecy* according to the proportion of our faith;

7 Or ministry, *let us give ourselves* to our ministry; or he that teacheth, to his teaching;

8 Or he that exhorteth, to his exhorting; he that giveth, *let him do it* with liberality; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.

9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

10 In love of the brethren be tenderly affectioned one to another; in honor preferring one another;

11 In diligence not slothful; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing stedfastly in prayer;

13 Communicating to the necessities of the saints; given to hospitality.

Golden Text.—"Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2: 20.)

Devotional Reading.—Rom. 12: 14-21.

Daily Bible Readings

August	1. M.....	The Ideal Christian (Matt. 5: 1-16)
August	2. T.....	Growing in Grace (2 Pet. 1: 1-11)
August	3. W.....	A Divine Standard (Isa. 1: 10-17)
August	4. T.....	Christian Citizenship (Rom. 13: 1-10)
August	5. F.....	Keeping Body Under Bondage (1 Cor. 9: 19-27)
August	6. S.....	Body Not for Sin (1 Cor. 6: 12-20)
August	7. S.....	Self-denial Required (Luke 9: 57-62)

TIME.—A.D. 58.

PLACES.—Corinth and Rome.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints at Rome.

Golden Text Explained

1. **Death precedes life.** As physical death must precede eternal life, so a spiritual death must precede spiritual life with Christ. Paul had to be crucified with Christ before he could live with Christ. (Rom. 6: 8.) And in the verse from which our text is taken Paul places his crucifixion with Christ before Christ could live in him. In his crucifixion with Christ certain old relationships were destroyed and certain other new relationships were established, (a) He died to the law so that it was no longer an occasion to sin. (Rom. 7: 4-6.) Paul represents all Christians as having died with Christ to the law so that they are no longer subject to it and are free to be married to Christ. It is necessary to become dead to the one that we might be married to the other. Again, Paul says we were redeemed from the law that we might receive the adoption of sons. (Gal. 4: 5.) (b) He was crucified to the world. (Gal. 6: 14.) Crucifixion was not only a means to putting a man to death, but it was a way of showing the utmost contempt for that one. During the lawless days of "the old west" communities sometimes showed their contempt for a criminal by dragging the body at the end of a rope until it was dead; there was no way of showing more contempt for one. So when Paul was crucified to the world, he was made contemptible in the eyes of the world. From the world's point of view he was as contemptible for accepting Christ as Christ was in his death. But the feeling between Paul and the world was mutual, for the world was crucified unto him. He ceased to love the world and the things of the world. (1 John 2: 15, 16.) He died unto the world that he might have Christ to live in him. (c) He died to sin. (Rom. 6: 2, 11.) When he was baptized into Christ, he was baptized into the death of Christ, which is death unto sin. (Rom. 6: 3, 10.) Becoming identified with Christ in his death unto sin, and that death to sin was necessary that the body of sin might be destroyed, that he should no longer be in bondage to sin. (Rom. 6: 5-7.) Christ could not live in one who is still the slave of sin,

so it was necessary that Paul die to sin and cease to be the slave of sin.

2. Union with Christ brings life.

(a) This fact is obvious from our relation to Christ as a member of the body over which he is the head. (Col. 1: 18.) A member of my physical body which is severed from its relationship with the body soon perishes. As physical life is in the physical body, so spiritual life is in the spiritual body, and it is only in union with that body that any individual can expect to have spiritual life, (b) This lesson is plainly taught in the parable of the vine and the branches. (John 15: 1-7.) Jesus is the vine and individuals are the branches. As the branch cannot live and bear fruit without abiding in Christ. Union with Christ is essential to life and fruitbearing because spiritual life is had only in union with him who is the life. (John 14: 6; 1: 4.) In union with Christ there is life; in union with Satan there is death. Responsible people are in union with Christ or Satan. There is no such thing as being in union with neither. Christ in you means life; Satan in you means death. Each must make his choice, (c) Possession of the Son gives life. This principle has been taken for granted; we shall now see the scriptural proof for it. Jesus said, "As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father: so he that eateth me, he also shall live because of me." (John 6: 57.) To eat Christ is to receive and possess him, and to do so results in life. Again he said, "The Son also giveth life to whom he will." (John 5: 21.) "And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life." (1 John 5: 11, 12.) So Paul says that he lived because Christ was in him. He had the Son, therefore he had the life. That life was not his, but Christ lived in him, and he lived because Christ lived in him.

3. **The life of Christ in us manifested in our life.** Paul said he no longer lived, but Christ lived in him. Paul no longer manifested his own will and desires, but he allowed the

will and desires of Christ to find expression in his activities. "For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh." (2 Cor. 4: 11.) But how can the life of Christ be made manifest in our mortal flesh?

(a) By being completely submissive to the will of the Father. Jesus said, "I have meat to eat that ye know not. . . . My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work." (John 4: 32, 34.) Again, "For I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." (John 6: 38.) No one can manifest Christ in him while he is contending for his own will and way matters of religion. We manifest Christ first by *seeking* to know the will of the Father; next, by finding our hearts in *perfect agreement* with and loving that way of life; and finally by *doing* the will, living the life revealed in that will, of the Father. Anything less than complete surrender to the will of God fails to manifest Christ as he wishes to be made known to the world through us.

(b) In love and service to others. The life Jesus lived on earth was full of doing good to others. (Acts 10: 38.) He fed the hungry, healed the sick, released those who were held in slavery by demons, taught

the ignorant, encouraged the weak and erring, and wept in sympathy with the sorrowing. If Christ lives in us today and is being manifested in our mortal flesh, we will be busy doing these same things to the extent of our ability. No one can be selfish with his time, talents, and money while his fellow men go in need and claim that Christ lives in him. Selfishness is as much unlike Christ as some of the unthinkable sins which the selfish person would condemn,

(c) In personal devotion and consecration. If Christ lives in us, and his life is manifested in our mortal flesh, we will follow his example of consecration to the Father and of devotion to him and his way of life. At twelve years of age Jesus was surprised that his mother did not know to find him in the temple. (Luke 2: 49.) He insisted that John baptize him in order that they might fulfill all righteousness. (Matt. 3: 15.) He often spent whole nights in prayer to his Father. (Luka U: 12.) It was his custom to be at the place of worship and to take part in that worship. (Luke 4: 16.) When he prayed, he said he did not wish to have his own way, but that the will of his Father might be done. (Matt. 26: 39.) If Christ lives in us, we will let his life of devotion be seen in us.

Exposition of the Text

I. God's Mercy Obligates Us (Rom.

12: 1, 2)

I beseech you . . . by the mercies of God. Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, had every right to *command* them, but he preferred to *beseech*: but "authority is never more lovely than when concealing itself in affectionate entreaty." (Lard.) The mercies of God are shown in many ways. (a) God gave us life. If there is any happiness in life, we owe God thanks for it since he gave us life, (b) God sustains life, good health of mind and body, food and raiment, even every good and perfect blessing. If God were to withdraw his sustaining power from us, we could not survive one second, (c) God gave his Son to die for us that we might not have to suffer the penalty for our sins, that we might be forgiven, sanctified, and purified that we might be fit to live with God in heaven, (d) God spared our lives until we decided to turn from sin

and accept Christ, so we owe our salvation to his longsuffering. (2 Pet. 3: 15.) (e) He promises to guard us from the evil one and keep us through faith ready for the eternal salvation ready to be revealed at the last day. (2 Thess. 3: 3; 1 Pet. 4, 5.) Surely so many wonderful blessings from God put us under eternal obligations to him who was in no way obligated to us.

To *present your bodies a living sacrifice*. This exhortation is made to people who are already Christians, so this is not an invitation to people to become Christians. We are to offer continually our bodies in sacrifice to God on account of his mercies to us. Notice that it is the body mentioned here. Certainly the inner man is to be given to God, but Paul emphasizes the fact that the body, so often the instrument of sin (Rom. 6: 12, 13), is to be given both living and holy. The word living is capable of more than one meaning, (a)

It may be that Paul meant to contrast the sacrifices of the Christian system with those of the Mosaic system. (b) The word living may mean constant, as when we speak of constantly flowing water as living water,

(c) Our bodies are to be given to God while they are full of the life and vitality with which God endowed them. When people have spent the physical and mental vigor God gave them in the service of sin and their bodies, like that of Abraham, are about as good as dead (Rom. 4: 19), they can hardly give their bodies a living sacrifice. This should appeal to young people especially to give their bodies while they still abound with that physical and mental vitality which will enable them to render a worth while service to him who has shown so many mercies to them.

Holy, acceptable to God. These bodies are to be holy before they can be offered in sacrifice to God. Thoughts, words, and deeds which are impure will defile the body. (Mark 7: 20-23.) Paul gives three reasons why the body is to be kept pure, (a) It belongs to God and was made for his use. (b) It is a member of Christ, in such relationship that what the body does either honors or dishonors Christ, (c) The body is a temple of the Holy Spirit and he deserves a holy place in which to dwell. (1 Cor. 6: 13-20.)

Which is your spiritual service. It is doubtful if the word *spiritual* is a happy selection as a translation of the Greek. Thayer defines the Greek to mean "rational, agreeable to reason, reasonable." Lard says the word "here seems to have the force of logical or consequential, and to denote a service which results logically from what precedes." Clarke says, "A religious service according to reason, one *rationally performed.*" McGarvey says, "Therefore your logical service (the one rationally expected of you by reason of the truths revealed in this epistle, especially chapter 6) is to present your bodies, etc." If God has done so much for us, does it appeal to you as unreasonable that he should ask us to give our bodies as living and holy sacrifices to him? Surely there is nothing unreasonable in this request since God has given his Son and the Son gave his life.

Be not fashioned according to this world. This is a second request he makes of us on account of the mer-

cies of God. Since God has been so good to us, we should not fashion our lives after the world, but after Jesus Christ. Paul says when we walked after the course, or fashion, of this world we walked in divers lusts, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind. (Eph. 2: 1-3.) Since this course results in our being children of wrath and following the example of Jesus Christ results in our being heirs of God and joint-heirs of Christ, we can agree with Paul that this is a reasonable course of life.

Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind. The transformation, or change, of life from the likeness of the world into the likeness of Christ is to be brought about by the renewing of the mind. "The natural mind, weakened, trammelled, confused, and darkened by sin and Satan, can neither fully discern nor adequately appreciate the Christ model, so as to metamorphose the life to its standards." (McGarvey.) But the renewed mind enlightened by the teaching of Christ and strengthened by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 3: 16) is capable of transforming the life into the likeness of Christ in such way as to prove, or demonstrate, what is the "good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

II. Humility with Reference to Our

Gifts (Rom. 12: 3-8)

I say, through the grace that was given me. Paul said he had "received grace and apostleship, unto obedience of faith among all the nations." (Rom. 1: 5.) But his apostleship was especially unto the Gentiles, that they might be made acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 15: 15, 16.) And he speaks of this responsibility as "a dispensation of that grace of God" which was given to him to make known the mystery of Christ. (Eph. 3: 1-6.)

Not to think of himself more highly. This was Paul's message to every man in the church. We are not to have inflated estimates of our abilities. Nothing is more unlike Christ than self-esteem, egotism, and presumption. Pagans who had recently come into the church and had been given spiritual gifts enabling them to speak with foreign tongues, or to heal the sick, and other things of a miraculous nature, were likely to let such power "go to their heads" and cause them to think themselves su-

perior to others who had no such gifts. Paul exhorted them to have a sober estimate of themselves and of their powers.

According as God hath dealt to each man a measure of faith. In this statement Paul seeks to help them to a sober estimate of their abilities. In reaching this sober estimate of their abilities, they are to remember that these abilities, especially the miraculous, were given in harmony with the "measure of faith" which God had given them. The amount of faith they had received from God determined the extent of their powers, so they were dependent upon God and had nothing of which to boast. But what is meant by the measure of faith given by God? This cannot be the faith that comes from hearing. (Rom. 10: 17.) The faith which comes by hearing is the common faith. (Tit. 1: 4.) But there is an uncommon faith, miraculous faith, which is a gift of the Holy Spirit imparted by the laying on of apostle's hands. (1 Cor. 12: 9.) It is the faith which enables men to remove mountains. (Matt. 17: 20.) From this statement of our text we conclude that "each man" who could work miracles had this faith in some measure, and that the measure to which he had this uncommon faith, which came as a gift of the Holy Spirit, determined what he could do in the miraculous realm. This being true, he could not do anything God had not given him the ability to do, so he had no reason to think of himself as superior to any other man.

Even as we many members in one body. Paul uses the human body to illustrate the interdependence of all members upon one another. All the members of our body do not have the same office, for if all were an eye, where were the hearing? (1 Cor. 12: 14-17.) But the diversity of members does not destroy the unity of the body, provided they learn their individual places and duties in the body and perform their work in the way God intended. Such lack of cooperation cannot very well happen in the human body, but it often happens in the spiritual body, the church, when some men come to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think and try to rule or ruin the body.

Having gifts differing according to the grace. Paul emphasizes the fact that our gifts, whether miraculous

or natural, are according to grace and not according to what we deserve. If God should deal with us according to what we deserve, we would all be lost.

Whether prophecy. This is one of the nine gifts of the Spirit imparted by the apostles. (1 Cor. 12: 10.) The gift of prophecy was not limited to foretelling events, but enabled one to edify, and console as the Spirit moved him. (1 Cor. 14: 3.) We have no prophets today. We have people who can edify, exhort, and console, but they do not do it as the Spirit moves them; there is no one to impart the gift of prophecy. Paul further exhorts the prophets to prophesy "according to the proportion of our faith." By this he means that one is to use his gift to the extent of the ability God has given him. What God gives a man God expects man to use, and will punish him if he does not use it.

Let us give ourselves to our ministry. If a man has received the gift of ministering, he must give himself to that work. The word *ministry* comes from the same word as deacon and likely refers to work of the nature of that done by deacons. It would not include teaching and preaching, as these things are mentioned in this same list of gifts.

Or he that teacheth. Teachers were set in the church. (1 Cor. 12: 28.) When Paul told Titus how to set the church in order, he told him to have aged women to be teachers of good things. (Tit. 2: 1-5.) The office of teacher was given for the perfecting maturing of the saints. (Eph. 4:

11-16.) People who have been in the church a long time are supposed to be able to teach others. (Heb. 5: 12-14.)

He that exhorteth. Exhortation is to the emotions what teaching is to the understanding. To exhort is to appeal to people to put into practice what they have learned. Paul and Barnabas made a great team because Paul was naturally, and by inspiration, a great teacher, while Barnabas was a great exhorter. (Acts 4: 36.) These abilities are rarely found in one man, so we might bring more people to Christ if we would give more attention to using teachers and exhorters in teams, especially campaigns to reach and save sinners.

He that giveth. The construction of the Greek sentence at this point sug-

gests that there is a change from miraculous to natural gifts. (McGarvey and Lard.) But the same principle applies here that he whom God has enabled to make money is to recognize this as a gift from God, and he is as much obligated to use it for the glory of God as the man who has a gift for teaching is obligated to use that gift for God. Especially is this true now that both the gift of teaching and the gift of making money are natural—that is, they are non-miraculous. If God has enabled me to teach and I do not use that gift for him, I will be in the class with the one-talent man who was lost for refusing to use his gift. (Matt. 25: 24-28.) It follows that, if God has given a man the ability to make money, and he does not use that gift to make money for the Lord, he will be lost. Many men use the gift God has given them to make money, but they do not use the money for the Lord. Surely this is an aggravation of their guilt.

He that ruleth . . . that showeth mercy. The elders, or overseers, are the rulers in the church, and this undoubtedly refers to them. The diligence here demanded of them is a lesson most elders of today need very much. Church discipline is almost a lost art, a forgotten duty. Some think Paul has the deacons in mind when he mentions those who show mercy, because their work takes them among people in conditions and circumstances where mercy is especially needed. We may all be cheerful in our deeds of mercy.

III. General Exhortations to Christian Living: (Rom. 12: 9-13)

Let love be without hypocrisy. Not only our love for our friends, but that for our enemies, is to be sincere and genuine. We are told to love not in word only, but in deed and in truth. (1 John 3: 18.)

Abhor that which is evil. Here we have the key to Christian living. We never wish to do that which we hate, abhor. So if we learn to abhor all that is evil, we will never wish to do evil. Then it is always easy to do that which we love. So if we learn to love all that is good, we will find it easy to do good always. But how can we learn to hate the evil and love the good? David says we learn to hate evil by gaining a knowledge of the word of God. (Psalm 119: 104, 128.) Not

only must we have a knowledge of the word, but we must put it into practice. We learn to love right by doing right, as well as by meditating upon the right.

In love of the brethren. We are told to love the brethren tenderly. This word suggests the love which parents have for children, so our love for one another in the church is to be as tender as that which members of a family have for each other. This love was to lead them to honor each other, each striving to honor others above himself. (Phil. 2: 3, 4.)

In diligence not slothful. In church work and in helping each other we must not be slothful. The Lord's business requires thought, energetic action; lazy, sluggish, slothful people bring reproach upon the Lord. We cannot conceive of Jesus being lazy and indifferent about his work in teaching and serving people. The word *fervent* in this verse means red-hot, seething, boiling. And this should be our attitude toward our church work. To be otherwise in serving the Lord is to show that we have left our first love.

Rejoicing in hope. The preceding verse regulated the outward while this regulates the inward man. Hope is composed of expectation and desire, and relates to that which is future. We do not hope for that which we have. (Rom. 8: 24, 25.) The hope of eternal life makes it possible for us to rejoice even in the midst of afflictions and persecutions. If we rejoice in hope, we can be patient in tribulations. To be patient means that we will endure them without fretting or losing faith in the goodness of God. And the next word exhorting us to continue in prayer will help us to be patient in tribulations. Of course, we are to pray at all times, not just when we are in trouble.

Communicating to the necessities of the saints. This simply means that those who have are to share with those who have not. Certainly there are limitations to this teaching, for Paul says we are not to give to a man who will not work. (2 Thess. 3: 10.) But we are more likely to fail to give to worthy people than we are to give to unworthy. This is a much neglected command.

Given to hospitality. Be thoughtful of the welfare of strangers, for you

might help angels. (Heb. 13: 1, 2.) Some churches are cold and indifferent to strangers, especially if they

are not well dressed. We can easily drift into sin in this matter. (James 2: 1-9.)

Lessons to Learn

1. We can never pay God for the least 'blessing he ever gave us. His mercy is so abundant and continuous that we can never begin to estimate our debt of gratitude to him. Hence, the least we can afford to do is to give ourselves to him in loving service.

2. Since God has given us all the ability we have, we have no reason to boast of what we can do. If he had not given us our ability, we would be in much worse condition

than some of whom we look as inferior to us. Be not highminded, but fear.

3. There is nothing in the list of Christian duties and characteristics which tends to cheapen us in the eyes of man or God. Everything we are commanded to do strengthens, purifies, and exalts us. The requirements of the gospel make us better parents, children, neighbors, citizens. We are therefore left without excuse for not obeying these commands.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?
Repeat the golden text from memory.
Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

What experience must precede life with Christ?
Discuss the necessity and benefits of Paul's death to law.
What is meant by being crucified to the word?
What is meant by death to sin?
When does it occur?
In what relationship is spiritual life found?
How does the parable of the vine and branches teach the necessity of union with Christ?
Can you give scriptural proof that possession of the Son gives life?
Name and discuss three ways in which the life of Christ can be manifested in us.

God's Mercy Obligates Us

Name and discuss briefly several ways in which the mercy of God is shown to us.
What is meant by giving living bodies as sacrifices?
Give three reasons why the body is to be given a holy sacrifice.
What is the meaning of spiritual service as used in our text?
What is meant by being fashioned according to this world?
How is our transformation brought about?
What assistance do we have from heaven in this transformation?

Humility with Reference to Our Gifts

What was the grace given Paul through which he spoke?
What advice did Paul give concerning humility?
What is meant by the measure of faith given?
Who possessed it?

What kind of faith was given by measure?
How did Paul teach interdependence and cooperation between members of the church?

What is meant by prophecy?
To what extent was this gift to be used?
What is the meaning of the word ministry in our text?
What do you know of the office and work of teachers?
What is said in our lesson about exhorters?
How many gifts in this list are non-miraculous?
Are we obligated to use the non-miraculous gifts to the same extent as the miraculous?
Who are rulers in the church?
How are they to exercise their gift?

General Exhortations to Christian Living
What is said about the exercise of Christian love?
What is the key to Christian living?
How can we learn it?
What is said about the way we are to love as brethren?
What does Paul say about diligence in Christian living?
What is hope?
What will hope do for us?
What is patience?
In what is patience to be exercised?
What is said of the Christian's prayer life?
What is said in our lesson about sharing with others?
What limitations are placed on sharing our goods with others?
What is said about hospitality in our Christian life?
How can congregations fail to show hospitality to strangers?
What is your congregation doing to avoid this?
What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson VII—August 14, 1955

PAUL, A MINISTER OF JESUS CHRIST

Lesson Text

Rom. 15: 15-29

15 But I write the more boldly unto you in some measure, as putting you again in remembrance, because of the grace that was given me of God,

16 That I should be a minister of Christ Je'-sus unto the Gen'-tiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Oen'-tiles might be made acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

17 I have therefore my glorying in Christ Je'-sus in things pertaining to God.

18 For I will not dare to speak of any things save those which Christ wrought through me, for the obedience of the Gen'-tiles, by word and deed,

19 In the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Holy Spirit; so that from Je-ru'-sa-lem, and round about even unto Il-lyr'-i-cum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ;

20 Yea, making it my aim so to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation;

21 But, as it is written,
They shall see, to whom no tidings of him came,

And they who have not heard shall understand.

22 Wherefore also I was hindered these many times from coming to you:

23 But now, having no more any place in these regions, and having these many years a longing to come unto you,

24 Whensoever I go unto Spain (for I hope to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first in some measure I shall have been satisfied with your company) —

25 But now, I say, I go unto Je-ru'-sa-lem, ministering unto the saints.

26 For it hath been the good pleasure of Mage-e-do'-ni-a and A-cha'-ia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints that are at Je-ru'-sa-lem.

27 Yea, it hath been their good pleasure; and their debtors they are. For if the Gen'-tiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they owe it to them also to minister unto them in carnal things.

28 When therefore I have accomplished this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will go on by you unto Spain.

29 And I know that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"I am debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish"* (Rom. 1: 14.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rom. 15: 1-14.

Daily Bible Readings

August 8. M.....The Sower (Mark 4: 10-20)
August 9. T.....Preaching Christ (1 Cor. 2: 1-10)
August 10. W.....Preaching Not Ourselves (2 Cor. 4: 1-15)
August 11. T.....Preaching the Cross (1 Cor. 1: 18-30)
August 12. F.....Message to the World (Matt. 28: 18-20)
August 13. S.....Philip Preaches in Samaria (Acts 8: 1-12)
August 14. S.....Preach the Word (2 Tim. 4: 1-18)

TIME.—A. D. 58.

PLACES.—Corinth and Rome.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints at Rome.

Golden Text Explained

1. Meaning of the text, (a) I am a debtor. Paul felt himself in debt to the whole world to preach the gospel. This was not because the whole world had done him a favor and laid him under obligation to everybody, for, of course, this was

not true. So great was his appreciation of the goodness and mercy of God in saving his soul that he wished to do as much as possible to honor and glorify God in return for his goodness. This he could best do by saving as many souls as

possible. It was impossible for Paul to do anything to help God, for God is independent of man's service. But God does have a program going on in the world, and a part of that program is given into the hands of men. And this program can prosper only as men are willing to do their part. We do not pay God for saving us by taking part in and doing what we can for this program, but we do show our love for God and our gratitude to him for what he has done for us when we take our place in and bear our part of the responsibility for the success of this program in the world. To fail or refuse to have any part in this program is to refuse to recognize our debt to God or to humanity. Though not every one can preach the gospel like Paul, it still is a fact that every person saved by grace is a debtor in God's sight and the only way he can discharge this obligation is to take his place in this program and bear his part of the burden of carrying it on in the world,

(b) To Greeks and Barbarians. The Greeks represented the culture of Paul's day. Greek language was universally read and Greek customs and culture were common in all the civilized world. Paul's use of the word did not exclude the Romans, for he would not refer to them as Barbarians, or uncultured people. Sometimes the word barbarian is used to mean one who does not speak the language of the writer or speaker. (1 Cor. 14: 11.) But likely Paul's meaning here is that he is a debtor to both the cultured and uncultured, (c) To the wise and to the foolish. This simply means the learned and unlearned, the educated and the uneducated. The apostles were referred to as unlearned and ignorant men. (Acts 4: 13.) In the minds of the cultured Jews the apostles were unlearned because they gave no evidence of Jewish culture; they were ignorant men because they had not attended the rabbinic schools. But as we look at them, they were highly learned in the essential things of life.

2. Implications of our text, (a)

All are obligated. Paul did not stand alone in his obligation to serve the cultured and uncultured, the learned and unlearned. He made that statement that he might suggest to all who read it that they have a similar

obligation. Certainly not all are obligated to do the same thing Paul did to pay his debt. A body is composed of many members having various functions, but each one is necessary to the proper functioning of the body. And no one individual member can fail to function without impairing the efficiency of the body. So in the church each member has his work to do and a failure means the weakening of the body and a contribution to the failure of the body to accomplish its work. And it should be remembered that such a contribution to the failure of the body is a contribution to the success of the devil. If Paul had failed to realize his debt and had not made his contribution to the success of the Lord's program, think what a contribution he would have made to the success of the devil's program,

(b) Our obligation is in proportion to our ability. Paul continues his statement by saying, "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome." (Rom. 1: 15.) By this he means "to the extent of my ability and opportunity." Some one has said that ability plus opportunity equals responsibility. God gives us our ability, so he knows how much we have. It is human to minimize our ability in order that we may escape responsibility. People often say they do not have ability to teach others how to become Christians, or that they do not have ability to lead an acceptable prayer in public. The fact that one has no ability to do these things would certainly excuse him from the responsibility; but usually the truth is that he cannot do these things simply because he has not applied himself in the exercise of the ability God gave him. God does not give us full-grown ability; he does not mechanically make us able to do things at first as well as we can do them after years of experience. This means that we must cultivate the ability he gives us. If we do so, we will be blessed; but if we fail for trivial reasons, we will be punished, (c) Opportunity determines responsibility. Paul had been willing to preach to the Romans, but he lacked opportunity. (Rom. 1: 13.) We are not condemned for failure to do the things we have no opportunity to do. But Paul did not sit down and refuse to preach to any one just because he did not

have the opportunity to preach to the brethren at Rome. When he was in prison, he had little opportunity to preach, but he made good use of what opportunities he had. We are likely to do nothing for the Lord because we do not have the opportunity to do what we wish to do. The man who has the ability to preach but does not do so because some big church does not pay him a good salary does not feel this debt very keenly. Many members of the church say they would be willing to work for the growth of the church if they knew what and how to do. There may be two reasons for this. First, they may be looking for some big job, not satisfied to do the little jobs which bring no public notice and praise, thinking that these little insignificant (?) jobs are not worth the time and effort they cost. Second, there is the possibility that the church is not properly organized to do the work, and the workers do not have the proper supervision. This

has been true in many congregations where the elders, overseers, have little vision and less time to oversee, supervise, the work of the church. And many capable workers in the Lord's vineyard have been lost just because they had no supervision and encouragement, (d) We can make our opportunities. Does someone with ability say that the church is so large that he never has an opportunity to exercise his talents? If so, and that is the case in some places, that person should either create a situation where he can work for the Lord, or go to some other community where the opportunity exists. There are many cities where the church either does not exist, or is weak, where he can exercise his abilities to the limit. No one needs to be a drone in a big hive while there are so many little places calling for his talents. Your eternal salvation may depend on your making an opportunity to exercise the peculiar ability God has given you.

Exposition of the Text

I. Purpose and Extent of Paul's Ministry (Rom. 15: 15-21)

I write the more boldly unto you in some measure. Scholars are divided on the meaning of this verse. Some think Paul admits that certain parts of his letter were rather bold. The words *some measure* are taken by them to mean *some parts*, or statements. But others take it as an explanation of the boldness of the entire letter—his boldness being *partly* because he had been appointed as an apostle unto the Gentiles. This seems to be more in harmony with the context.

As putting you again in remembrance. In verse 14 Paul had acknowledged their full knowledge of the gospel and their ability to admonish one another. In keeping with that, he now says he does not presume to teach them things they never knew, but is only bringing these teachings to their remembrance. This shows deep humility in Paul as well as a most tactful approach to his readers. Preachers might profit by the good example of the right approach in teaching people the truth.

Because of the grace that was given me of God. Paul looked upon his office and responsibilities as a favor from God rather than as a duty. The grace given him was the favor

shown in selecting him as an apostle and a preacher of the gospel. The office of governor of the state and that of president of the nation are favors in the hands of the people to be given to men of their choice, and yet they carry with them grave responsibilities. So the office of apostle and preacher was a favor from God, but fraught with grave responsibilities. But in spite of the latter, Paul was grateful for the favor.

I should be a minister of Christ Jesus unto the Gentiles. The word *minister* is not from the usual Greek word from which we get our word *deacon*, but it is a special word which properly means a servant of the public. Those in government positions, especially those who execute the laws, are said to be such ministers of God for our good. (Rom. 13: 6.) It would be used of a priest who serves God. (Heb. 8: 2.) So Paul says he is rendering such a service to the Gentiles as the priests under the law rendered to their people. Angels are spoken of as such servants. (Heb. 1: 7.)

Ministering the gospel of God. This word *ministering* is from a different Greek word from the word *minister* in the previous phrase. This means "to be busied with sacred things; to perform sacred rites; to minister in the manner of a priest." (Thayer.)

From the connection of the phrase in the sentence it is clear that this is the work of Paul was called of God to do; it was his work as an apostle and preacher of gospel. So Paul likens himself unto a priest who is handling the gospel of God in his priestly work in such manner as to establish certain results which are next mentioned.

That the offering up of the Gentiles. This is the purpose for which Paul is handling the gospel in the manner of a priest—that the offering up, sacrifice, of the Gentiles to God might be made acceptable unto God. Barnes misses the point here by saying that Paul's work was for the purpose of making the sacrifices which are offered by the Gentiles acceptable to God. The point is that Paul was preaching the gospel so that the offering which consisted of the Gentiles might be acceptable to God. Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles; they were his special charge; and he looks upon himself as a priest offering them to God as a sacrifice and wishes them to be acceptable to God.

Being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Here we learn that the Holy Spirit is the agent in our sanctification. Sanctification is that process which the Holy Spirit, as the representative of the Godhead, makes us holy, transforms us into the likeness of Christ. While the Holy Spirit is the agent, the word of God, the truth, is the instrument of sanctification. (John 17: 17; 2 Thess. 2: 13.) The word is the sword of the Spirit. (Eph. 6: 17.) God working in us to will and to do for his good pleasure is the Holy Spirit sanctifying us. (Phil. 2: 13.)

I have therefore my glorying in Christ Jesus. Paul would not glory in personal honors and accomplishments, but being an apostle of God unto the Gentiles he had a right to glory in such things as pertained to God and his work, which God was doing through him. But even in this he would not speak in such way as to give the honor to himself, but to God. It was not what he had done for God, but what God had done through him. If such humility was necessary in an apostles, surely it would be becoming in us of lesser stature.

By word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders. In three clauses Paul states the means at his

disposal for bringing the Gentiles to obedience. The first is by preaching and godly living; word and deed. No doubt Paul mentioned these first because they are permanent and essential in the conversion of every soul. The power of signs and wonders was for the purpose of confirming the word (Mark 16: 17-20. Heb. 2: 2-4), and was not to be continuous throughout the Christian dispensation (1 Cor. 13: 8-10). The record of confirmation which we have in the New Testament is sufficient for our faith, so there was no need for them to be continued in operation. The phrase "in the power of the Holy Spirit," need not be distinguished from the other two expressions as a separate power, but rather modifies the others and teaches that his preaching, living, and miracles were all done in the power of the Holy Spirit.

So that from Jerusalem, and round about. There are about as many different explanations for the mention of Jerusalem as one limit of Paul's work as there are commentators. Some say it is the eastern limit of his work, but Arabia has to be considered. (Gal. 1: 17.) If he ever preached in Illyricum, we have no record of it, but he may have gone that far west on one of his trips into Macedonia. But there is no difficulty in determining his meaning, that he had preached in the regions roughly bounded by these well-known places.

Not where Christ was already named. This was one thing in which Paul took special pride, that he could preach the gospel where it had never been heard, and that he could do it without charge to the people to whom he preached. Though he admitted that those who preach the gospel are to live of the gospel (1 Cor. 9: 14), apologized to Corinth for doing them wrong in this matter by not accepting money from them (2 Cor. 12: 13), yet he was determined to continue such a course, choosing to die rather than accept pay for his work (1 Cor. 9: 15). But Paul admitted this was merely a personal feeling with reference to paying the preacher and taught the truth in spite of his personal feelings. He did not violate his teaching, but simply did not choose to depend on the churches for support. His practice of preaching the gospel where it had never been heard before is worthy of our

study and imitation. There are preachers among us who have never had the experience even one time in their whole life. They ought not to be satisfied until they have had this rich and soul-exhilarating experience. And to do it at their own expense adds to its richness.

II. Paul's Plans for Ministry in Rome

(Rom. 15: 22-24)

I was hindered these many times. Paul had long wished to have the privilege of going to Rome to preach the gospel, but had been hindered. (Rom. 1: 13.) How he had been hindered we have no way of knowing, but we do know that the Holy Spirit sometimes kept him from going into certain places to preach the gospel. (Acts 16: 6, 7.) His imprisonment in Caesarea could have hindered him from going after he had made good his promise to take the contribution to the saints in Jerusalem.

Having no more any place in these regions. Since Paul had a policy of preaching only where Christ had not been heard, and Christ had been preached in all the regions of that section north of the Mediterranean and east of Greece, he had to look for new fields. He does not mean every soul has been converted and that no more preaching was needed, but on account of his intention to preach in regions where Christ had not been named he had to go elsewhere. There was still work for those who could be satisfied to preach where Christ had already been named. In fact, Paul stayed in those parts nearly a year longer.

Whensoever I go unto Spain. Paul had a great desire to go to Spain, but we do not know definitely that his desire was ever gratified. If he was released after a first trial, as most scholars now think most probable, it is likely that Paul went to Spain for about two years. There is no record of his traveling with Titus in Crete, or of his leaving Timothy at Ephesus (Tit. 1: 5; 1 Tim. 1: 3), so the supposition is that they were with him on his journey from Spain through the Mediterranean and that he left these helpers at these places while he went on into Macedonia, where he was arrested and taken to Rome for a final and speedy trial and execution.

To be brought on my way thitherward by you. Both Lard and Mc-

Garvey say that Paul is tactfully suggesting that he hopes the church at Rome will see fit to help him financially, as well as in other ways, to continue his journey to Spain. It is true that the idea of accompanying him on the journey is included (Acts 15: 3; 21: 5), but those accompanying were supposed to bear the expense of the journey. Thayer says the Greek here means "to fit him out with the requisites for his journey."

Satisfied with your company. Paul makes it plain that he does not plan to stay with the church at Rome, for he wishes to spend his time where the gospel has not been heard. But he does wish them to know that he desires their company and expects to be refreshed and encouraged by his association with them as well as to leave a blessing with them. (Rom. 1: 11, 12.) Roman Catholics say Peter went to Rome in A.D. 42 and was Pope from that time forward until his death. It is certainly strange that Paul would write the church a letter about a visit with them but not one time mention the Pope. Surely the Pope himself cannot account for such a personal slight on the part of so good and pious man as was Paul. But it is just as difficult to understand why Paul could have been in Rome two years in his own hired house (Acts 28: 30), and Luke, the inspired historian, made no reference to a visit from Peter during the imprisonment. Were Paul and Peter not on visiting and speaking terms with each other? Catholics are unable to prove that Peter was ever in Rome, and much more unable to prove that he was Pope with offices in Rome.

III. Paul's Ministry to the Poor

Saints (Rom. 15: 25-29)

I go unto Jerusalem. Paul felt morally bound to go to Jerusalem with the money he had collected from the churches of Asia and Greece. When he was in Caesarea in the home of Philip, the evangelist, a prophet named Agabus came to him and told him that he would be bound in Jerusalem. (Acts 21: 10-14.) The brethren begged him to stay out of Jerusalem, but he told them he was ready to die there if necessary. This was the collection which he told the brethren in Corinth to be prepared to make when he arrived. (1 Cor. 16: 1, 2; 2 Cor. 8 and 9.)

It hath been the good pleasure. Though Paul urged them to do so, he speaks of it as their good pleasure, showing that these churches entered wholeheartedly into the relief work Paul suggested to them. The churches in Macedonia contributed more than they were able to do, first giving themselves to the Lord and then to Paul and his work. (2 Cor. 8: 1-5.) You will notice that this project originated with Paul, an individual preacher, and not with any one congregation. We have brethren objecting to men originating such projects and asking churches to cooperate with one another for its accomplishment. Such objections, and objectors, would force Paul to give up his relief work, for he was not able personally to give sufficient money, nor was any one congregation able to give enough, to satisfy the needs of so many poor saints. Though Paul mentions only Macedonia and Achaia as taking part in this collection, there is every reason to believe that the churches of Asia had a part in it too. For Paul mentions giving orders for such a collection in Galatia. (1 Cor. 16: 1.)

And their debtors they are. That is, the Gentile churches of Asia Minor and Greece are in debt to the churches of Judea for the gospel. Jesus said salvation is from the Jews. (John 4: 22.) They gave us a Savior and Redeemer; they first preached the gospel to the Gentiles, so the Gentiles, are much in debt to the Jews. Jewish Christians around Jerusalem were in unusual poverty at this time, due both to natural causes (Acts 11: 27-30) and to persecution (James 2: 4-7). Paul not only hoped to relieve their suffering, but he had hopes of cultivating a better feeling between Jew and Gentiles. The Jews resented the Gentiles' presence in the church uncircumcised. Paul felt that the Jews would think their

religion more genuine and sincere if they could see some practical fruits in the way of relief from cold and hunger.

The Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things. These spiritual things of the Jews of which the Gentiles were now partakers were simply the gospel and its attendant blessings. The gospel had been preached by the Jews to the Gentiles. The church had been established in Gentile communities by Jewish preachers, such as Paul and his companions in missionary work.

To *minister unto them in carnal things.* Paul affirms that since the Jews had made such a great contribution to the spiritual welfare of the Gentiles, these should in turn make a contribution of their carnal things to the physical welfare of the Jews. There is, therefore, such a thing as an obligation resting upon us to help people whom we have never seen. This rule of sharing carnal things with those who share their spiritual things with us might well be applied by churches to their dealings with their preachers and elders. Even teachers who have rendered long, faithful, and efficient service to a class should be remembered at least occasionally with something to prove the gratitude of the class for their service.

I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ. This means that Paul would come filled with blessings from Christ to impart to the saints at Home. He expected the Lord to use him for the strengthening and edification of the saints. He did not know how he would go to Rome, and surely did not expect to go at the expense of the state, a prisoner. But regardless of the manner of his going, he expected to be a blessing to the church when he arrived. In this he sets us all a fine example.

Lessons to Learn

1. Since Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles, he wished to preach in as many Gentile communities as possible, so he made it his aim to preach only where the gospel had not been heard. But he did not bind this rule on all preachers of the gospel.

2. Paul longed to see distant lands, but not as a tourist; he wished to visit in the nation's capital city, but not

merely as a sightseer; he often went out to sea, but not for the sport of fishing. Paul's thoughts and energies were consumed with greater and more important matters and sets a good example for preachers of all time.

3. Those who make their living by engaging in carnal, material, activities are obligated to share their carnal things with those who give

themselves wholly to spiritual work. Freedom from financial worries and anxieties will make the one "minis-

tering the gospel of God" much more efficient and effective than he can possibly be when burdened by such.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?
Repeat the golden text from memory.
Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

Why did Paul feel himself a debtor to all men?
How did Paul expect to pay this debt?
What is the meaning of Greeks and Barbarians?
What is meant by the wise and the foolish?
Why were the apostles counted ignorant and unlearned?
By the use of the body, can you show that all have their obligations to Christ?
What is the consequence of our failure to accept our obligations?
What determines that extent of our obligations?
How and why do people minimize their abilities?
Discuss two reasons why many people do not use their opportunities to serve.
How can we make opportunities to serve the Lord?

Purpose and Extent of Paul's Ministry

What is meant by writing boldly in some measure?
How does Paul show his humility and tact in this letter?
What was the grace God gave Paul?
What is the meaning of the word minister in our lesson?
What is meant by ministering the gospel?
What is meant by the offering up of the Gentiles?
What is sanctification?
How is it accomplished in us?
In what was Paul willing to glory?
With what was Paul equipped to bring the Gentiles to obedience to Christ?
Why mention word and deed first?

What part did the miraculous play?
How did Paul describe the extent of his work of preaching to the Gentiles?
In what type of community did Paul prefer to preach?
How strong was his determination in this matter?
Did he bind this method of work on all other preachers?

Paul's Plans for Ministry in Rome

Why had Paul not gone to Rome before?
How was he sometimes hindered?
Why did Paul think the time was ripe for going to Rome?
What country did Paul expect to visit after seeing Rome?
What part did he expect Rome to have in his trip to Spain?
What blessing did he expect to get from Rome?
What did he expect to give?
What evidence do we have that Peter was not in Rome at this time?

Paul's Ministry to the Poor Saints

Why did Paul wish to go to Jerusalem?
How intent was he on going?
With whom did the idea of a collection for the poor saints originate?
Is this an example of congregational cooperation in a job too big for any one church?
Over how large an area did Paul collect funds?
Why were Gentiles in debt to the Jew's?
What two purposes did Paul have in mind for taking this collection?
How can the principle of sharing carnal things in return for spiritual service be applied in churches today?
What is meant by coming in the fullness of the blessing of Christ?
What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson VIII—August 21, 1955

PAUL WRITES TO THE CHURCHES OF GALATIA

Lesson Text

Gal. 1: 1-10

1 Paul, an apostle (not from men, neither through man, but through Je'-sus Christ, and God the Father who raised him from the dead),

2 And all the brethren that are with me, unto the churches of Gal-a'ti-a:

3 Grace to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Je'-sus Christ,

4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us out of this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father:

5 To whom *be* the glory for ever

and ever. A-men'.

6 I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel;

7 Which is not another *gospel* only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be an-ath'-e-ma.

9 As we have said before, so say I I now again, If any man preacheth

unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anath'-e-ma.
 10 For am I now seeking the favor

of men, or of God? or am I striving to please men? if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"I beseech you, brethren, become as I am"* (Gal. 4: 12.)
 DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—Gal. 1: 11-22.

Daily Bible Readings

- August 15. M..... Paul in Galatia (Acts 16: 6-10)
- August 16. T..... Paul Passes Through Galatia (Acts 18: 22-28)
- August 17. W..... Instability of the Galatians (Gal. 1: 6-10)
- August 18. T..... The Foolish Galatians (Gal. 3: 1-14)
- August 19. F..... Galatians' Attitude Toward Paul (Gal. 4: 12-20)
- August 20. S..... Paul's Regard for the Galatians (Gal. 6: 11-18)
- August 21. S..... Biographical Facts Concerning Paul (Gal. 1: 11-24)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACES.—The place of writing is unknown, perhaps Corinth; churches of Galatia were in central Asia Minor.

PERSONS.—Paul and the disciples of Galatia.

Golden Text Explained

1. Free from ceremonialism. Paul wrote this letter to the churches of Galatia because word had reached him that they were about to give up the gospel which they had received from him to go back to the law with its rites and ceremonies. In the verses preceding our text he says, "But now that ye have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how turn ye back again to the weak and beggarly rudiments, whereunto ye desire to be in bondage over again? Ye observe days, and months, and seasons, and years. I am afraid of you, lest by any means I have bestowed labor upon you in vain." (Gal 4: 9-11.) Paul had once observed all these days, and months, and season and knew the slavery of such a system. He had given up all that for Christ and knew the joy of freedom from the slavery of ceremonialism and wondered why these Christians of Galatia could wish to leave the liberty they enjoyed in Christ to go back to the burdensome ceremonialism of the law. Peter spoke of these rites and ceremonies as "a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear." (Acts 15: 10.) Not only were they observing days and seasons, they were allowing the Jewish teachers to bind circumcision upon them. To save them from this, Paul taught them that, if they received circumcision, which was one point of the law of Moses, they were bound to accept and observe the whole law. But if they tried to find justification through the

law, they repudiated Christ who fulfilled the law, so were fallen away from grace. (Gal. 5: 1-5.) There was a time when Paul gloried in the fact that he was a Jew and was circumcised on the eighth day according to the requirement of the law of Moses, but through Christ he had been freed from such ceremonialism, and he was anxious to save these Galatians from being brought into bondage by those Jewish teachers who still contended that Gentiles must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses in addition to obeying the gospel. (Acts 15: 1, 5.) So when Paul asked these brethren to become as he was, he requested them to free themselves from all bondage to Jewish ceremonialism and enjoy freedom from such in Christ Jesus.

2. Glory in Christ, not in the flesh. Paul said, "Though I myself might have confidence even in the flesh: if any other man thinketh to have confidence in the flesh, I yet more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; as touching zeal, persecuting the church; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless." (Phil. 3: 4-6.) There was a time when these things meant much to Paul; he gloried in them and felt that they assured him an acceptance with God here and hereafter. But when Paul found Christ, he realized that these things were not worth anything to him. He had suffered the loss of all these things that he might gain

Christ; and having found Christ, he had come to realize that these things were mere refuse, trash. There are two steps which Paul had taken and which he wanted these Galatians to take with him. First, he had given up these things which stood between him and Christ. These were things of the world, of the flesh, which were so contrary to the spirit of Christianity that he could not glory in them and in Christ at the same time. He had to give up these things in order to have an enjoy Christ. Next he was not murmuring about having to do without these worldly things; he found Christ so much better and more precious to him that these worldly, fleshly things now seemed as trash to him. Some people find the courage, through a sense of duty, to give up these worldly things which stand between them and Christ, but they never quite grow in appreciation of Christ to the point where they loathe the things of the world. Like the Jews of old, who would have left the manna in the wilderness to go back to Egypt and endure bondage just to enjoy the flesh-pots of Egypt. (Ex. 16: 3), they have ceased the practice of worldliness, but they have never driven the desire and love for such things from their hearts. Paul begged these Galatians to become as he was, not only free from glorying in the things of the flesh, but counting them as trash that they might the more surely have and enjoy Christ in their lives.

3. Be steadfast in the faith. This letter was written to the Galatian churches to keep them from departing the faith of the gospel. Paul said, "I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of

Christ." (Gal. 1: 6, 7.) And again he said, "For freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage." (Gal. 5: 1.) To be steadfast and consistent in faith and practice of Christian teaching and living is an admirable accomplishment. The graph of one's life will inevitably show a series of ups and downs, some less and some more serious. But as one grows older in the faith, the downward trends should appear less frequently and be less serious. If this is not true, the individual is not growing in grace and knowledge of Christ as he should. But Paul was afraid these people in Galatia were going to abandon their hold upon Christ completely, so that all the labor he had bestowed upon them would be in vain. (Gal. 4: 11.) Mark was lacking in the quality of steadfastness when he turned back from the work he started to do with Paul and Barnabas in the country of the Galatians. (Acts 13: 13.) This lack of steadfastness on our part may be caused by several things, (a) It may be a love of the world and things of the world which we have allowed to linger in our hearts; turning from our first love of Christ back to the world shows our lack of steadfastness, (b) It may be on account of a failure to count the cost of living the Christian life. After learning the sacrifices and sufferings one must endure, many give up the fight, thus showing their lack of steadfastness, (c) Jesus said a lack of depth of character causes some to give up. (Matt. 13: 21.) One cannot think of Paul giving up and quitting because of some difficulty, opposition, or enticement to pleasures of this life or lusts of the flesh. So when he begged the Galatians to become as he was, he wished them to be steadfast in their love and loyalty to Jesus Christ.

Exposition of the Text

I. Paul's Introduction (Gal. 1: 1, 2)

Paul, an *apostle*. That Paul was an apostle, appointed to the office by Jesus Christ, none will deny. We have Luke's record of the appearance of Christ (Acts 9: 15, 16); Paul's own statement for the appearance and appointment (Acts 22: 14, 15; 26: 16-18); and his affirmation of his apostleship in many of his letters (1 Cor. 9: 1, 2; 2 Cor. 12: 12). But his appointment either makes thirteen in

the apostolic office, or we must conclude that the Lord did not accept Matthias as an apostle. (Acts 1: 17-26.) Good men among us have taken the position that the eleven apostles acted without authority when Matthias was selected and that the Lord never appointed him or recognized him as an apostle of Christ. However, this writer takes Luke's statement that Matthias "was numbered with the eleven apostles" as

an inspired statement. Luke also said, "The twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them." (Acts 6: 2.) Not only did the apostles and all the church consider Matthias as chosen and appointed by Christ (Acts 1: 24, 25), but the inspired writer so considered and spoke of him. Hence, we conclude that there were thirteen apostles. We should not be so surprised at this since there were actually thirteen tribes of Israel, though they are continuously spoken of in the Bible as "the twelve tribes of Israel." In each case the form of expression was set before the thirteenth was added; the number was changed but the form of expression remained the same.

Not from men, neither through man. The apostleship to which Paul refers here was not *from* men as the ultimate source, nor was it *through* a man as the representative of a group of men, such as a church. The word apostle is used with reference to two classes of men. (a) To those men whom Jesus appointed personally during his life and to Paul, to whom he appeared miraculously after his ascension, (b) To men who were appointed and sent by churches with authority to represent the churches. Barnabas, along with Paul, is called an apostle. (Acts 14: 14.) Other men are called "apostles of the churches," but the English reader loses the term by the translation into "messengers." (2 Cor. 8: 23; Phil. 2: 25.) The word means "one sent"; one "deputed by some eminent authority . . . whose mission related to matters connected with religion." (Pulpit Commentary.) The word is never used of those who were sent on ordinary missions, but always of those who were sent on an important mission. Though Paul was made such an apostle of the church at Antioch on different occasions when he was sent by that church on mission tours, he passes this apostleship by for that higher and more authoritative apostleship he had from Christ and God the Father. The teachers who were troubling the churches of Galatia, no doubt, could show that they were apostles of churches in Judea, appointed by prominent men, but they could not affirm that they had been appointed by Jesus Christ and God the Father. Hence, Paul lays stress upon this apostleship and completely ignores that from the church at Antioch.

Unto the churches of Galatia, (a)

It is good for us to know something of the origin of these people to whom Paul wrote. They came from Gaul in third century before Christ. In B.C. 189 they were conquered by the Romans, but allowed considerable freedom because Rome was unable to rule them as she did other provinces. It was not until B.C. 65 that Rome was able to put one ruler over all these Gauls, (b) The presence of Jewish influence in this part of Asia Minor is accounted for by the fact that Antiochus the Great, King of Syria, sometime before Rome conquered him in B.C. 191, transplanted two thousand Jewish families from the area around Babylon to the central part of Asia Minor. It was to Jews in this section that Peter addressed his letters. (1 Pet. 1: 1.)

(c) When Paul labored in this area and established these churches is a matter difficult to determine, and one on which there is so much disagreement among eminent scholars that we can do no more than guess at which is right. Some view a part of Paul's work on the first missionary journey as being done in the larger area of Galatia, while others object, saying that Galatia did not reach that far south. Some think that Paul may have labored there before he went to Antioch. Others think, perhaps with better ground, that Paul visited them for the first time when he was on his second missionary journey. Mention is made of his visits with the churches he established on his first journey (Acts 16: 1-5), and then he is said to have gone through Phrygia and the region (country) of Galatia (verse 6). He visited them again on his third journey. (Acts 18: 23.) (d) As to the date and place of writing of this letter we are still at sea. Some think it was written from Ephesus soon after his second visit in Galatia because he told them he was surprised that they were "so quickly removing" from their recently formed connections. (Gal. 1: 6.) Some even think it was written from Rome, but there seems to be no ground for this at all. The most conservative scholars seem to think it was written from Corinth in the winter of A.D. 57. (Conybeare and Howson.)

II. Paul Ascribes Deliverance to Christ (Gal. 1: 3-5)

Grace to you and peace. This is

Paul's usual salutation. (Rom. 1: 6; 2 Cor. 1: 2.) It is a combination of the Greek and the Jewish forms of greetings. Grace is Greek and peace is Jewish. The Greek grace "denotes the outpouring of Divine benignity in all such spiritual blessings as sinful creatures need." And the Hebrew peace wishes health and wealth as well as peace, "and to have generally expressed the more limited idea of that calm sense of reconciliation and that perfect security against evil which constitute the peculiar happiness of a soul who believes in Christ." (Pulpit Commentary.)

From God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul recognizes no distinction between the Father and Son as to the source of our grace and peace. Though, had he been emphasizing the mediatorship of Jesus Christ, he might have said they come from the Father *through* the Son. This form of expression shows the equality of the Son with the Father as the source of all our blessings. In verse 1 Paul ascribes his apostleship to both the Father and the Son in the manner of expression.

Who gave himself for our sins. Paul emphasizes the sacrifice of Christ for our sins that they may realize that their turning from the gospel will mean the loss of all the blessings secured to them by the death of Christ. No doctrine of the gospel can mean any more to us than this concerning the death of Christ for our sins. Jesus said he came to give his life a ransom for many. (Matt. 20: 28.) He said no man could take his life from him, but that he was willing to lay it down for his people. (John 10: 17, 18.) The love manifested by the Father in the gift of his Son, and the love of the Son in giving up his life in shame and suffering for us, is the greatest demonstration of unselfish love the world has ever seen, or will ever see. The soul who is not stirred by this love to give himself to God is not, regardless of his moral attainments, worthy to be called good. Paul says Jesus gave himself for the church (Eph. 5: 25) and for the redeemed ones (Tit. 2: 14). But here he says Jesus gave himself for our sins, meaning that Jesus died for, on account, of our sins, to save us from our sins. He was our sin-offering through which we obtain the forgiveness of our sins on condition we obey him.

That he might deliver us out of this

present evil world. The word *deliver* suggests that we were in a condition from which we could not save ourselves. If we had been able to save ourselves, this particular word would not have been used, though what he did might materially assist us. But since we were wholly unable to bring about our own escape from this present evil world, Paul uses this word *deliver* to show that Christ did for us what we could not possibly do for ourselves. This present evil world "means the world as it is, without religion, a world of bad passions, false opinion, corrupt desires; a world full of ambition, and of love of pleasure, and of gold; a world where God is not loved or obeyed; a world where men are living regardless of right, and truth, and duty; where they live for themselves, and not for God; in short, in that great community, which in the scriptures is called THE WORLD, in contradistinction from the kingdom of God. That world, that evil world, is full of sin; and the object of the redeemer was to deliver us from that; that is, to effect a separation between his followers and that." (Barnes.) Paul calls this world *evil*. There are two words for evil in the Greek. One means evil which is content to be evil by itself; the other is missionary in its nature, wishing to spread to all about it. This evil world is not content to be evil by itself, it is determined to cause us to be evil. But Jesus is determined to deliver us from it. This does not mean to take us out of it by death into heaven where we can be free from its influences, but this is a present deliverance, keeping us from the evil in the world. (John 17: 15.) In answer to our prayers (Matt. 6: 13), he guards us from the evil one (2 Thess. 3: 3). Then of course he will finally remove us from this world in the sense of taking us to heaven where there can be no evil. (Rev. 22: 14, 15.) But we should rejoice in the fact that he gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us out of this present evil world, that he might protect us from the dangers incident to living and working in this evil environment. Peter says about the same things: "Who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed." (1 Pet. 2: 24.) Here Peter tells us that Jesus

had to die that we might live unto righteousness.

According to the will of our God. Jesus gave himself for our sins according to the will of God. It was God's will that he die for our sins. Peter says Jesus was delivered up by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God. (Acts 2: 23.) Had his death not been according to the will of the Father, it could never have been said that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that we might not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3: 16.) See also 2 Tim. 1: 8-10; 1 Pet. 18-25.

III. Danger of Perverting the Gospel

(Gal. 1: 6-10)

That ye are so quickly removing from him. Paul had difficulty in understanding why these Galatians were becoming unfaithful so soon. Though he may have been absent from them for somewhat less than ten years, this was still an early apostasy. The word *him* in this verse has given commentators much difficulty. Were they removing from God, Christ, Paul, or the gospel? We can eliminate Christ, for they are said to be called by *him* in the grace of Christ. Calling is ascribed to God in so many passages that we can hardly fail to recognize the calling as from God in this verse. (Rom. 8: 30; 1 Cor. 1: 9; 1 Thess. 2: 12; 5: 24; 2 Tim. 1: 9.)

Called you in the grace of Christ. It is God who does the calling, but he does not do it directly and miraculously. Paul says, "He called you through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. 2: 14.) The phrase *in the grace of Christ* is difficult. Most commentators give it the meaning of *into* the grace of Christ as is mentioned in Rom. 5: 2. But the prepositions are different, and the construction of our text will not admit of the sense of *into* the grace of Christ. Alford says the grace of Christ is the medium through which God calls us, and that the grace of Christ is the sum of all he has done and suffered for us.

Unto a different gospel. They were removing from God, who called them through his gospel, to another, a different, gospel. Unless God has two gospels through which he calls people, since they were leaving the gospel through which God called them by the preaching of Paul, they

were leaving God. And Paul hastens to say that there is no such thing as *another* gospel of God, for God has only one gospel. That which they have heard, therefore, is not another gospel of God, but a perversion of the gospel Paul had preached. Notice also that Paul says the Galatians are *troubled* by this perverted gospel which is being preached to them. The gospel in its purity brings peace, but the perversion of it brings trouble and apostasy from the faith. The same thing is true today; the many perversions of the gospel of God can never bring peace, but trouble.

Though we, or an angel from heaven. Paul now begins to show the dreadful consequences of perverting the gospel of God. Regardless of how learned the preacher may be, or how important his person and connections, he cannot preach a perverted gospel with bringing upon him the anathemas of heaven. Even angels who would dare to change the message of God through Christ would be accursed.

Let him be anathema. The meaning of this word has given some trouble, since Paul says he would be willing to be anathema if by doing so he could save his Jewish brethren. (Rom. 9: 3.) But, according to trustworthy authorities, the word means "devoted to the direst woes, to destruction; separation from Christ." So the man, or angel, who would pervert the gospel of God so that it fails to accomplish the salvation of men exposes himself to destruction, separation from Christ. This can mean nothing less than eternal death and destruction from the presence of the Lord.

As we have said before. Whether this refers to what was said in the preceding verse or to what he had told them on some occasion when in their presence is difficult to know. (2 Cor. 13: 2.) But regardless of when he had so spoken, the repetition is for the sake of emphasis. And the emphasis of this statement should be more respected in our day than it is. When following some course is attended by such dire consequences as the perversion of the gospel, and when it is of such nature that inspired men repeat their warning against it in such short compass, we should certainly exercise extreme care to avoid that course.

Am I now seeking the favor of men? Paul had been accused of fav-

oring the Gentiles by encouraging them to think they could be saved without circumcision. His enemies said he was seeking the favor of the Gentiles by making their acceptance to God easier than his Jewish enemies. But Paul denies that he has never preached anything primarily to please men. His primary purpose was to please God. If men were pleased by that which pleased God, he was happy; but if that which pleased God was displeasing to men, he would not pervert the gospel in order to please men. The connection here seems to be that Paul is using this strong statement of condemnation to prove that he is not determining his preaching by that which will

please men. If he were primarily a man-pleaser, he would not have spoken such strong condemnation of those who were perverting the gospel to lead the Galatians away from God.

I should not be a servant of Christ. Those whose primary aim is to please men are not servants of Christ. This does not mean that one whose preaching pleases godly men is not a servant of Christ, for there will always be devout Christians who are pleased when the gospel is preached in its purity and displeased when it is perverted. But no one can make it his primary aim to please men and be the servant of Christ.

Lessons to Learn

1. If Jesus was willing to give himself up in death to save us from our sins, we should certainly be willing to live for him. What he did for us deserves more than we can ever do for him regardless of how long we may live and how fervently we may serve him. None of us can say that we are anything more than a sinner saved by grace.

2. Man, unaided by the Lord, can never raise himself above sin. Humanity has never been able to rise higher and higher from one generation to another through its own wis-

dom and efforts. In fact, its course has always been downward. Only through the help of God has man ever been able to make any progress toward purer living.

3. How fearful is the responsibility of the preacher and teacher of the gospel! If we so pervert the gospel as to render it incapable of saving a soul, not only will that soul who is misled fail to be saved, but the teacher will be accursed. Those who have the courage to teach in the face of this anathema deserve our respect and encouragement.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

Why did Paul write this letter to the Galatians?

Why was Paul afraid they would apostatize?

How did Paul try to keep them from going back under the law?

Why did Paul once think he had a right to glory in the flesh?

What two steps had Paul taken with respect to the things of the world?

How did the Galatians show a lack of steadfastness?

Discuss several ways in which our lack of steadfastness may show itself.

Paul's Introduction

What proof do we have of Paul's apostleship?

What evidence can you give that Matthias was accepted as an apostle?

If there were thirteen apostles, why is the number twelve always used?

What does the word apostle mean?

Can you name some who were apostles of churches?

What do you know of the origin of the Galatians?

How do you account for Jewish influence in Galatia?

When did Paul establish the churches of Galatia?

What do you know of the date and place of writing of this letter?

Paul Ascribes Deliverance to Christ

What is the meaning of grace and peace?

How does Paul show the equality of the Father and the Son in this salutation?

For what purpose did Jesus say he came into the world?

In what was the greatest demonstration of love this world has seen?

What is meant by the word deliver in this text?

What is the meaning of this present evil world?

What is the meaning of the word evil in this verse?

What do you know of the will of God concerning the death of Jesus?

Danger of Perverting the Gospel

At what in the Galatians did Paul marvel?

From whom were these people removing?

How does God call us?

What is the meaning of the phrase "in the grace of Christ"?

What is the consequence of leaving the gospel of God?

What effect did this perverted gospel have upon the Galatians?

How did Paul show the dreadful consequence of perverting the gospel?

What is the meaning of the word Anathema?
How does Paul emphasize this warning against perverting the gospel?

How did Paul prove he was not seeking to please men?
What is the consequence of pleasing men?
What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson IX—August 28, 1955

PAUL REBUKES PETER

Lesson Text

Gal. 2: 11-21

11 But when Ce'-phas came to An-ti-och, I resisted him to the face, because he stood condemned.

12 For before that certain came from James, he ate with the Gen'-tiles; but when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing them that were of the circumcision.

13 And the rest of the Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that even Bar'-na-bas was carried away with their dissimulation.

14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Ce'-phas before *them* all, If thou, being a Jew, livest as do the Gen'-tiles, and not as do the Jews, how compellest thou the Gen'-tiles to live as do the Jews?

15 We being Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gen'-tiles,

16 Yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Je'-sus Christ, even

we believed on Christ Je'-sus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law: because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

17 But if, while we sought to be justified in Christ, we ourselves also were found sinners, is Christ a minister of sin? God forbid.

18 For if I build up again those things which I destroyed, I prove myself a transgressor.

19 For I through the law died unto the law, that I might live unto God.

20 I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and *that life* which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, *the faith* which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me.

21 I do not make void the grace of God: for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nought.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Ye *all are one man in Christ Jesus* " (Gal. 3: 28.)
DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gal. 2: 1-10.

Daily Bible Readings

- August 22. M.....Oneness in Christ (Rom. 12: 1-8)
- August 23. T.....The Mind of Christ (Phil. 2: 1-11)
- August 24. W.....Reconciliation (Matt. 5: 21-26)
- August 25. T.....Example of Forgiveness (Gen. 45: 1-11)
- August 26. F.....Brotherliness Taught (Rom. 12: 9-21)
- August 27. S.....All One in Christ (Gal. 3: 26-29)
- August 28. S.....All Nations Cleansed (Acts 10: 1-16)

TIME.—A.D. 57.
PLACES.—Corinth and Galatia.
PERSONS.—Paul and the disciples of Galatia.

Golden Text Explained

1. All outward distinctions forgotten.

Paul uses the strongest figure of speech possible to teach us the unity which is to exist in Christ. He says we are one man. He did not say we act as one man. As the members of my body form one man so that we lose sight of the individual members and think only of the one person, so all in Christ are one man, one

creation, and we lose sight of the variety of members which make up that body to see only the one creation. As the individual trees make the forest, and we see only a forest, forgetting the individual trees, so all in Christ make up one creation, and we lose sight of the individuals from many races and different walks of life to see only the new man. (a) Racial

distinctions are to be forgotten. This does not mean that one ceases to be red and another ceases to be black, etc., but it does mean that we recognize the equality of all before God. God deals with all races on the same basis; he loves one as much as he loves the other, and so should we; he accepts worship from one the same as he accepts it from another; and he blesses one as freely as he blesses another. We should be as willing to preach the gospel to one race as another; we should rejoice in the religious and intellectual progress of one race as much as another; and we should work toward the betterment of one race as much as we would work for the betterment of another.

(b) Social distinctions are forgotten. Paul says the bond and the free are all one in Christ. This does not mean that there is no longer such thing as a master and a slave, for he gave instructions concerning how they were to treat each other. (Eph. 6: 5-9.) But this does mean that we are not to allow social distinctions to determine our acceptance of people as Christians. God accepts the slave and blesses him as richly as he does the master. A slave might be more intelligent than his master and be worth more to the church as a teacher; he might be more consecrated and faithful to the Lord and so be worth more to the church than his master. People are not to be judged by their wealth or poverty, by their social or political positions in the community. Differences exist, and becoming a Christian does not destroy these differences, but we are to forget, or ignore, them in the church. James tells us that if we have respect of persons in these matters, we commit sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors. (James 2: 1-9.)

(c) Distinctions between man and woman is forgotten. This does not mean that on becoming a Christian sexual differences are destroyed, but it does mean that one's standing before God is neither bettered or made worse by being either man or woman. Neither does this mean that the duties of men and women are the same in the church, but it does mean that if a woman does her duty as well as a man does his duty, her reward will be just as great as his. This was a big step forward for women in the time of the apostles. Christianity has blessed womankind more than anythings else in all the history

of humanity. Where the Bible has not gone woman is virtually the slave of man, but as the Bible is circulated among people, woman is elevated and honored.

2. **This unity is possible in Christ.** Paul tells us that "in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ . . . that he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and he came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were nigh: for through him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father." (Eph. 2: 13-18.) Enmity between the races is abolished in Christ because (a) all are made nigh through the blood of Christ regardless of race or social position; (b) all are reconciled to God through the suffering of one Lord in one body on one cross; (c) the same Christ came and preached peace to all and on the same terms and conditions; all have access to one Father through the same Spirit. Paul continues this thought, saying that the Gentiles are no longer strangers from the covenants of the promise but they are fellow-citizens with the saints. The lack of distinction between the races is emphasized by the fact that (a) they are children in the same household; (b) they are built upon the same foundation of apostles and prophets; (c) they are stone in the same holy temple of God; (d) they are indwelt by the same Spirit as the representative of God. (Eph. 2: 19-22.) No one can conceive of God having one family for each race, different families for people in different social stations, or one family for the poor and another for the rich. No one can believe that the black man is built on one foundation and the white man on a different foundation, the red and yellow races on still other foundations. There is only one foundation, so there is no distinction between the races as to the foundation upon which they are built. God does not have one Holy Spirit to indwell the poor and uncultured and another Holy Spirit to dwell in the rich and cultured people. God dwells in people regardless of their financial and social conditions. These things are temporary and should not be allowed to de-

termine the things that are eternal. No one can conceive of God as classing the red and black races as wood, hay, or stubble while classing the white race as gold, silver, or precious stones in the temple of God. (1 Cor. 3: 12.) Nor can we think of God classing the poor and unlearned as cheap material while referring to the educated and rich as good building material. Since God does not make such distinctions, we should be careful to refrain from such.

3. Our obligations, (a) We are to set an example, both as individuals and as churches, by recognizing the unity which is to exist in Christ and by practicing it in our various relationships. (b) We are to make others conscious of this duty by

teaching them their duty and by correcting and reproving them wherein they fail. James says we commit sin when we recognize and practice such distinctions and sin can bar one from the joys of heaven, (c) We are to exhibit and offer the unity of the Spirit to the world as the basis for that unity of believers for which our Lord prayed. (John 17: 20-24.) It is worse than folly to insist that believers enjoy that unity. If Jesus prayed for it, we should work for it. To fail to work for it is to betray a lack of interest in the things which he desired and gave his life to gain. And to lack an interest in those things is to fail to be like Christ, than which there are few sins more serious.

Exposition of the Text

I. Peter Makes Racial Distinctions (Gal. 2: 11-14a)

When Cephas came to Antioch. We do not know when Peter was in Antioch; there is no indication here, or elsewhere, of the time of this incident, except that the implication here is that it occurred after the Jerusalem conference. This fact serves to aggravate Peter's guilt. Having helped arrive at the truth on the differences between the Jews and Gentiles in that conference at Jerusalem (Acts 15), we have a right to expect Peter to live in harmony with the decision he helped to make. If he, and other apostles, expected the Gentiles to abide by the decision, he should have done so himself.

I resisted him to the face. This difference between Paul and Peter was not introduced in this letter in order to give Paul an excuse to boast. Paul had two good reasons for introducing it. (a) Paul was defending his apostleship, which had been attacked in Galatia by his enemies; he was proving that he was not behind the very chiefest of the apostles appointed by Jesus before his death. In verse 6 to 10, of this chapter, Paul discussed his relationship with the "pillars" of the church in Jerusalem and showed that he was accepted by them as their equal. Now he relates his experience with Peter at Antioch to show that he stood for the truth when Peter was afraid to do so. (b) The subject discussed in their differences was in line with the problems Paul had to discuss with the Galatians,

who were suffering from the teaching of men who made such racial distinctions as Peter made at Antioch.

Before that certain came from James, he ate with the Gentiles. This James was the brother of Jesus and the leading spirit in the church at Jerusalem. (Acts 15: 13ff.; Gal. 1: 19.) Undoubtedly the Jews in the Jerusalem church practiced the rites of the law, and with the approval of James. (Acts 21: 17-21.) But James was in the conference in which Paul won the freedom of Gentiles from these ceremonies, and James, unless he weakened like Peter, did not authorize these Jews to force Gentiles to observe these rites. Paul did not deny the Jews the satisfaction of observing the ceremonies of the law, but he refused to allow them to force the Gentiles to practice them. Peter was observing the decision of the conference until these Jews came from Jerusalem. He was afraid of what they would think and say when they returned to Jerusalem, so under their influence he ceased to eat with the Gentiles on the ground they had not been circumcised. There is no doubt these men from Jerusalem claimed they were authorized by James to teach as they did. They could honestly say that James observed the ceremonies and approved of other Jews doing so; but they could not honestly say that James approved of their forcing the Gentiles to do so.

The rest of the Jews dissembled likewise. The word "dissemble" means to hide under a false pretense; to think one thing, but act as if you

thought another. So these Jews in Antioch, moved by fear of the men from Jerusalem, acted as if they thought it wrong to eat with the uncircumcised. They played the hypocrite. The word "likewise" suggests that this is what Peter was doing, and they merely followed his example. This suggests that Peter knew what was right, but because he feared his Jewish brethren he acted contrary to what he believed.

Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation. We could wish to know more of the workings of the mind of Barnabas. He had been with Paul more than any of the others involved in this incident. Undoubtedly he had heard Paul teach the relation of Gentiles to the law of Moses. Surely he and Paul had discussed this matter in private many times, as men will do when they are battling such live issues in the church. So far as we know, Paul stood alone. He needed support. To whom would he more naturally look than his companion and fellow-laborer? Likely Paul thought he knew the sentiments of Barnabas and felt that he could count on him to stand firm for the truth. How disappointed he must have been when news of the dissimulation of Barnabas reached Paul! Even stout, courageous souls might have weakened under such pressure of disappointment and desertion at that. But Paul was not made of the stuff that weakens and gives up in the face of difficulties. He realized that the fate of the church at Antioch, and perhaps the whole Gentile world, was in his hands. To give up meant to deliver the Gentile portion of the church hopelessly divided. Paul was not willing to accept either of these alternatives.

I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel. Paul had no fellowship with the works of darkness, and he went a step further to reprove them. (Eph. 5: 11.) Some will refuse fellowship in that which is unscriptural, but they will not take the next step necessary to reprove evil that it may be destroyed. If Paul had backed off to one side, refusing to go along with Peter, but had not rebuked him, the church would have suffered, and Paul would have proved himself a coward worth no more to the church than those who were doing wrong. Peter was among those who did not

walk according to truth, so was leading people into error. If Jesus made him the primary apostle, the pope, he proved himself very unworthy on this occasion to be the spiritual father of the people.

II. Paul Shows Peter's Inconsistency

(Gal. 2: 14b-17)

If thou, being a Jew, livest as do the Gentiles. Peter, a Jew, had been living as do the Gentiles, that is, he had been making no distinction between the circumcised and the uncircumcised until these men came from Jerusalem. He had not been living like a Jew. To live like a Jew was to observe the ceremonies of the law and refuse to accept Gentiles until they submit to the demands of the law. Peter not only was not forcing the Gentiles to live under the law, but he was leaving off the observance of those ceremonies while he was among the Gentiles. So he was living as do the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews.

How compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? The only force he was using on the Gentiles was that of the pressure of influence and persuasion. By withdrawing from them and refusing to eat with them on the ground that they were uncircumcised, he brought pressure on them to become circumcised and observe the other ceremonies of the law. In this way he was compelling the Gentiles to live as do the Jews. This was a charge of gross inconsistency. He was not condemning the Gentiles for living the very way he had been living only a few days before.

We being Jew by nature. This statement is the first part of a proposition, the conclusion being reserved to the last. This sets forth Paul and Peter as Jews with all their advantages over the Gentiles. (Rom. 3: 1, 2.) The phrase "sinners of the Gentiles" expresses the usual Jewish attitude toward Gentiles. They regarded Gentiles as sinners by reason of birth and not by reason of the way they lived. Regardless of the worth of the moral character of the Gentile, he was uncircumcised, he was a sinner and doomed to destruction, according to Jewish belief. For the moment Paul grants this view that he may reach his conclusion.

Knowing that man is not justified by the works of the law. We, Paul and Peter, learned that one

cannot be justified by the works of the law. Certainly not all Jews had come to this understanding, but Paul had every right to assume that Peter knew the lesson. Now if one is not justified by the works of the law, why compel them to live by the law?

Even we believed on Christ Jesus. The "even we" of this verse is significant. Paul means to make clear the idea that even Jews who held themselves to be so superior to all others had to admit there was no justification in the works of the law, and they had to believe in Jesus Christ just the same as did the sinners of the Gentiles.

That we might be justified by faith. Their placing their faith in Jesus Christ for justification was a repudiation of the law as a means of justification. If in his act of believing in Christ he repudiated the law as an instrument of justification, he was inconsistent in compelling the Gentiles to accept the law now as a means to their justification. Paul then repeats a favorite expression of his, "Because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." (Rom. 3:

20.) The rule of the law was, "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them . . . and the law is not of faith; but, he that doeth them shall live in them." The rule of the law was, Do or die! There was no pardoning clause, no atonement which could make satisfaction for sins; the law was weak in this respect and so could not bring justification. (Acts 13: 38, 39.)

But if, we ought to be justified in Christ. This verse is thought to be rather difficult, and commentators differ widely as to its meaning and connection with the rest of the passage. However, if we keep the situation of Paul and Peter in mind, we should have little trouble with it. "While we sought to be justified in Christ" refers to the time they had been living by the gospel, after repudiating the law as a means of justification. If during this time, we were found sinners is a statement referring to Peter's conclusion as expressed by his actions. By ceasing to eat with Gentiles he had admitted that he had been sinning while eating with them, and that was while he was trying to find justification through faith in Christ. Now, if while saying he was justified by

faith in Jesus, he was a sinner for eating with Gentiles, it would follow that Christ, who led him to make no distinction between the circumcised and uncircumcised, was a minister of sin; that is, Christ had led them into sin instead of justifying them from sin. This was a conclusion which was unthinkable to Paul. This explanation is not only in harmony with the meaning of the word and construction of the sentence, but it is in harmony with the general run of Paul's argument in proving the inconsistency and unscripturalness of Peter's actions on this occasion.

III. Living by Faith in Christ (Gal. 2: 18-21)

For *if I build up.* This verse is a conclusion to that which precedes. Peter's action on this occasion was building again that which he had helped to destroy. By his acceptance of Christ as a way of justification and by his preaching of the gospel as the power of God to save instead of the law, he had torn down the law as a means of justification. But by ceasing to eat with Gentiles and compelling them to live as do the Jews, he was building up again the law as a means of justification.

I prove myself a transgressor. This is what Peter had done, but Paul puts this statement in the first person to spare Peter as much as possible. If Peter was right in withdrawing from the uncircumcised, he was doing wrong when he ate with them; if he was right when he ate with them, he is wrong now that he refuses to eat with them. So Peter was so involved in inconsistency that he was a transgressor at one time or the other. This is a situation in which brethren who change from one position to another on account of pressure often find themselves and from which they often suffer embarrassment.

I through the law died unto the law. Paul is no longer using the first person to refer to Peter, but to express his own position in this matter. Regardless, Peter, of what you think, here is my position on this question. Through the leading, teaching, of the law I was brought to an experience which caused me to die to the law. To be dead to a thing is to be separated from that thing, and usually on account of pollution and uncleanness. Paul's position with ref-

erence to the law was that he was as one dead, so no longer under its dominion, as well as being ceremonially defiled by that death and so not fit to be a subject of the law. Peter could go back and renew his connection with the law to which he had died if he wished, but Paul regarded himself as dead to the law, and he intended to remain dead to it by refusing to seek justification from it or by forcing other people to do so.

That I might live unto God. There can be no such thing as being alive to the law and living unto God at the same time. If Peter wished to go back and renew his connection with the law, live unto the law, he would have to separate himself from God in Christ. Paul, understanding this matter of life and death, refused to become alive again to the law, and he pointed out this consequence to save Peter from separation from God. The same thought is taught in Gal. 5:1-5.

I have been crucified with Christ. In this verse Paul tells how he died unto the law. He became so identified with Christ in his death on the cross that he could say he was crucified with him. Crucifixion was a means of showing utter contempt for one, so in dying to the law Paul not only repudiated the law as a means of his justification, but he brought himself under the anathema of the law, which said, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree. (Gal. 3:13.)

It is no longer I that live. Paul is no longer seeking to determine his own life, but is allowing Jesus Christ to live in him and to manifest himself in his mortal body. (2 Cor. 4:10, 11.) Not only was his own will to find no expression in his life, but the law was to have no expression in that life which he now lives by faith in Christ. The relationship

of Christ and the Christian has often been illustrated by the relationship of the sun and the moon. As the sun shines on the moon, and that light reflected to the world, so Christ shines on the Christian, and his light is reflected by the Christian to the world. But this illustration is not true; it does not teach the truth about the relationship of the Christian to Christ. Rather we should say the light bulb illustrates that relationship. As the element is in the bulb and shines through the bulb, so Christ is in the Christian and shines through him. If he keeps himself clean, Christ can give light to the world.

I live in faith. The life we live in relationship to Christ is a life of faith. We walk by faith. (2 Cor. 5:7.) Faith comes by hearing the word (Rom. 10:17), so we live according to the teaching of God's word. That is the life of faith, but those who do as they please regardless of what the Bible teaches are not living by faith.

Who loved me, and gave himself up for me. Yes, Jesus died for all men. But there is comfort and encouragement to realize that he died for each one of us. If no one else had sinned, his death would be necessary to atone for my sins, your sins. He died for each one.

I do not make void the grace of God. Paul is contrasting his course with that of Peter, whose course on this occasion made void the grace of God. If people had to go back and live by the law, as Peter's action suggested, Christ, the manifestation of God's grace, died in vain. If we could be justified by the law, there was no need for the coming and death of Christ. Peter's action was a virtual rejection of Christ and a going back to that which existed before Christ for his justification.

Lessons to Learn

1. Public reproof of sin is necessary when the sin is public, especially if it is by a leader. Brethren sometimes criticize publishers for allowing differences between brethren to be made public through their periodicals. The same people would criticize Paul for making public his rebuke of Peter, if they dared. It is bad when brethren make mistakes, but it is worse to let the mistakes go without correction.

2. It is better to be right than to be

consistent, but it is best to be both right and consistent. We should be extremely cautious in our teaching that we never have to be embarrassed by the charge of inconsistency. But we must not let our embarrassment cause us to shut our eyes to evidence that proves us to be in the wrong.

3. We are to live unto God. He is to be the center of all our thinking and activities. No plans are to be

made without taking him into consideration. No work is to be begun without first being assured that such is his will. No desire or motives

are to be entertained in the heart which are not pleasing to him. No word should be spoken which does not meet his approval.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of this lesson?
Repeat the golden text from memory.
Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

What figure of speech does Paul use to teach us the unity which is in Christ?
What is meant by racial distinctions being forgotten?
What is meant by ignoring social distinctions in Christ?
What can you say of distinctions between man and woman?
Can you name several things Christianity has done for womankind?
Name and discuss several reasons why enmity between races is abolished.
The lack of distinction between races is because of what four fasts?
Name and discuss three obligations we have with reference to this unity.

Peter Makes Racial Distinctions

What do you know of the time Peter went to Antioch?
Give two reasons why Paul recorded this incident with Peter.
What do you know of James?
How was his name used in this incident and by whom?
What effect did the coming of Jews from James have upon the Jews in Antioch?
What prominent men were influenced by them?
What effect would this have on Paul?
By what standard did Paul measure the actions of Peter and Barnabas?

Was Paul wrong in raising a discussion about such questions?

Paul Shows Peter's Inconsistency

How had Peter been living as Gentiles?
How does he now force Gentiles to live as Jews?
What does Paul mean by saying they were Jews by nature?
What is meant by calling the Gentiles sinners?
How did Paul and Peter show that they realized men could not be justified by the law?
By what did they expect to be justified?
How does Paul use this to show the inconsistency of Peter?
How did Peter's conduct make Christ a minister of sin?

Living by Faith in Christ

How did Peter's action build up what he formerly tore down?
In what way did Peter prove himself a transgressor?
How did Paul die to the law?
What is meant by death to the law?
Why did Paul wish to die to the law?
What is meant by living unto God?
How does Christ live in us?
How is his life manifested through us?
How do we live by faith?
How does Paul individualize the love and sacrifice of Christ?
How did Peter's action make void the grace of God?
What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson X—September 4, 1955

THE BLESSING OF ABRAHAM IN CHRIST

Lesson Text

Gal. 3: 1-14

1 O foolish Ga-la'tians, who did bewitch you, before whose eyes Je'sus Christ was openly set forth crucified?

2 This only would I learn from you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh?

4 Did ye suffer so many things in vain? if it be indeed in vain.

5 He therefore that supplieth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, *doeth he it* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness.

7 Know therefore that they that

are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham.

8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gen'tiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all the nations be blessed.

9 So then they that are of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham.

10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them.

11 Now that no man is justified by the law before God, is evident: for, The righteous shall live by saith;

12 And the law is not of faith; but, He that doeth them shall live in

13 Christ redeemed us from

curse of the law, having become a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:
14 That upon the οεη'-tiles might

come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Je'-sus; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Golden Text.—"And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3: 29.)

Devotional Reading.—Gal. 3: 15-29.

Daily Bible Readings

August 29. M.....God's Promise to Abraham (Gen. 12: 1-3)
August 30. T.....Abraham, Hero of the Faith (Heb. 11: 8-19)
August 31. W.....God's Covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15: 1-18)
September 1. T.....Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 22: 1-14)
September 2. F.....Abraham's Faith (Rom. 4: 1-9)
September 3. S.....How Abraham's Faith Was Reckoned (Rom. 4: 10-25)
September 4. S.....Abraham's Seed (Gal. 3: 26-29)

Time.—A.D. 57.

Places.—Corinth and Galatia.

Persons.—Paul and the disciples in Galatia.

Golden Text Explained

1. Believers belong to Christ, (a) Paul speaks of the believers in Christ as belonging to Christ, but since religious teachers in general hold that faith only is the ground of belonging to Christ it is necessary for us to inquire, What kind of believer is the property of Christ? There are three distinct types of believers. First, there is the disobedient believer. He is the kind who believes, gives mental assent to the truths of the gospel, but for reasons of his own refuses to accept Christ and live in harmony with his teachings. Such were the Jews mentioned in John 8: 30-44 and 12: 42. Second, there is the believer who has been led astray by human traditions to do something which is no part of the gospel. Such were the twelve disciples at Ephesus when Paul first went there. (Acts 19: 1-7.) They believed in Christ, but received John's baptism after it ceased to be valid, when it was no longer required by the Lord. We know they were believers and yet they were not in Christ. If they had been in Christ, Paul would not have commanded them to be baptized into Christ. Since they were not in Christ, they did not belong to Christ. Third, there is the obedient believer, the one who not only believes in Christ, but obeys the commandments of Christ revealed in the gospel. This is the believer who belongs to Christ. Those who teach salvation by faith only should find one passage that promises salvation to a disobedient believer, or to a believer who obeys human tradition instead of gospel

commandments, (b) Next, we raise the question, How does the obedient believer belong to Christ? First, all belong to him by right of creation and preservation. All were created by him. (John 1: 1-3; Col. 1: 16; Heb. 1: 2.) He uphold, preserves, all. (Col. 1: 17; Heb. 1: 3.) Saint and sinner alike belong to Christ in this sense. Second, obedient believers belong to Christ because they are given to him by the Father. (John 6: 37, 39; 17: 6, 9, 24.) Third, they belong to Christ by right of purchase; he bought them with his blood. (1 Cor. 6: 20; Tit. 2: 14; 1 Pet. 1: 18, 19.) Fourth, the obedient believer belongs to Christ by right of conquest; he has been captured, taken away from Satan and translated into Christ's kingdom. (Col. 1: 13.) Fifth, he belongs to Christ by right of self-consecration; he has given himself to Christ. (2 Cor. 8: 5; 2 Tim. 1: 12.)

2. Believers are seed of Abraham.

(a) Christ is said to be the seed of Abraham. (Gal. 3: 16.) When God said to Abraham that he would bless the world through his seed, he did not mean the nation of people who should spring from Abraham; he had in mind only one person. Paul bases this conclusion on the fact that God used a singular word, *seed*, instead of the plural, *seeds*, when he made the promise. (Gen. 13: 15; 17: 8.) (b) We who believe are seed of Abraham because of our relation to Christ. Paul says that it is faith in Christ which makes us the children of Abraham. (Gal. 3: 7.) The faith

which leads one to be baptized into Christ (Gal. 3: 26) identifies one with Christ so that all the blessings promised to Christ as the seed of Abraham belong to all who are in Christ. Paul tells us, "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." (Rom. 2: 28, 29.) Writing to saints in Christ, Paul said, "We are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3: 3.) Then he explains how we are circumcised, saying, "In whom ye were circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ." (Col. 2: 11.) He then explains that this circumcision took place when we were forgiven of our sins by being buried in baptism and raised with him through faith in the working of God. (c) Regardless of outward circumstances, neither race, color, sex, nor station in life has anything to do with whether one is a child of Abraham in Christ. The Jews thought they had this blessing exclusive of all others, but Paul insists that such outward circumstances have nothing to do with determining our relationship to Abraham in Christ. (Gal. 3: 28.)

3. Believers are blessed with Abraham. "So then they that are of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham." (Gal. 3: 9.) (a) Peter tells us that this blessing which we receive as heirs of the promise is the forgiveness of sins. "Ye are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Servant, sent him to bless you, in turning away from

every one of you from your iniquities." (Acts 3: 25, 26.) The expression *turning away from your iniquities* means nothing more than the forgiveness of sins, because forgiveness follows our turning away from iniquities, (b) Paul tells us that Jesus died that this blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ. (Gal. 3: 14.) Though they were once afar off in their uncircumcision, separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of the promise and were without hope and without God, such is no longer their condition, for they have been brought nigh through the blood of Jesus and have been reconciled unto God through the cross of Christ. (Eph. 2: 11-19.) Paul says that Jesus died that they might have this blessing, and when they identify themselves with him in that death by being buried by baptism into death, they participate in the blessings gained for them through his death. (Rom. 6: 3, 4.) (c) Paul says we are partakers of the promise in Christ through the gospel of Christ. "That the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel." (Eph. 3: 6.) The Gentiles were not made partakers with the Jews through the law. (Gal. 3: 18.) The law was added to the promise to serve only until the seed, Christ, should come; when Christ had come, there was no longer any need for the law. It served only as a tutor to bring the Jews to Christ. (Gal. 3: 23, 24.) Since no one could be justified by the law (Gal. 3: 11), believers were not to be bound to observe the law in order to receive their blessings. These blessings were to come through faith, not through law. And this faith was obtained by hearing the gospel of Christ, not the law of Moses. (Rom. 10: 13-17; Acts 15: 7b.) This point is discussed at length by Paul in our lesson text.

Exposition of the Text

I. Blessings Through Faith, Not Law (Gal. 3: 1-5)

O foolish Galatians, who did bewitch you? The fact that the Galatians were about to turn from the gospel to go back under the law was so difficult for Paul to understand or believe that he speaks of them as being bewitched. Someone had

worked a charm on them, had fascinated them so as to rob them of their reason. And one reason why Paul could not understand why they were about to go back under the law was the fact that Christ was openly set forth crucified before their very eyes. This is strong language. Of course, Jesus was not crucified in Ga-

latia, nor does this statement mean that they had been in Jerusalem when he was crucified. But Paul had preached Jesus Christ and him crucified (1 Cor. 2: 2) and painted the picture so clearly that it was difficult to believe they could forget so soon.

This only would I learn from you. Paul seeks to settle the matter by propounding a question for them to answer from their own experience. He did not go into long and detailed arguments, multiplying words and developing philosophical and complicated reasons why they should not forsake Christ to go back to the law.

Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Their honest answer to this one question should settle the matter as to whether they should leave Christ and go back to the law. They knew they received the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, by the hearing of faith. Not even the most orthodox Jew would claim that people could receive the Holy Spirit by doing the works of the law. Therefore, if they prized the possession of the Holy Spirit with its comfort and fellowship (Phil. 2: 1), they should be faithful to Christ through whom they had received the Spirit. What is included in the reception of the Spirit is a matter of controversy. Clarke says it *may refer* to the miraculous gifts; Barnes says he thinks it refers to both the indwelling and the miraculous gifts. But they are unable to explain why Paul repeated himself in verse 5. It is best to include only that indwelling of the Spirit common to all children of God in this verse and accept the fifth verse as referring to the miraculous gifts. The phrase *the hearing of faith* also causes some difficulties among commentators. But since it is in contrast to *works of the law*, it seems best to take it to mean *obedience of faith*. The question is Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by obeying the gospel of Christ? The implication is, If you received the Spirit by doing the works of the law, go back under the law; but if you received the Spirit by obeying the gospel, stay with Christ under the gospel.

Having begun in the Spirit? In chapter 4: 1-7 Paul shows that they were like minors while under the law. but like full-grown men under

the gospel. They had graduated from the lower into the higher when they obeyed the gospel; would they now turn back into that from which they had graduated? The Spirit is superior to the flesh; would they now go from the superior to the inferior?

Did ye suffer so many things in vain? He refers to their suffering of trials when they obeyed the gospel. If they were going to live under the law, they should have stayed there and saved themselves that suffering. If they would remain faithful to Christ, they would be rewarded for that suffering, but if they go back under the law, there will be no reward for it; it will all have been in vain.

He therefore that supplieth to you the Spirit. Clarke and others say the word *he* refers to Paul who worked miracles among the Galatians. McGarvey and others say it refers to God; Barnes inclines to this latter view. Either will make good sense; neither violates any principle of truth. But the main point in verse is, Does the Spirit come to you with miracle-working power through your doing the works of the law of Moses or through your obedience to the gospel of Christ. In verse 2 we learned that Paul asked whether they received the Spirit through doing the works of the law or through obedience to the gospel of Christ. The idea of *receiving* the Spirit suggests that common measure, manifestation, which comes to all when they repent and are baptized in the name of Christ for the remission of their sins. (Acts 2: 38; 5: 32.) But supplying the Spirit and working miracles demands the unusual gift bestowed by the laying on of apostles' hands. (Acts 8: 14-18; 1 Cor. 12: 4-11.) Obviously neither manifestation of the Holy Spirit came to them on account of their doing the works of the law of Moses, but through their obedience to the gospel of Christ. The conclusion to this series of questions was that they should remain faithful to Christ who made it possible for them to enjoy the benefits of the Spirit in whatever measure it came to them. To go back under the law would deprive them of these benefits; to remain faithful to Christ would assure their continued enjoyment of them.

II. Abraham Blessed on Account of

Faith (Gal. 3: 5-9)

Even as Abraham believed God.

Paul uses Abraham for an example of receiving the blessings of God through faith instead of through the works of the law. His point is to show that Abraham was blessed on account of his faith, an obedient faith, instead of his doing the works of the law, and that since Abraham gained the blessing through faith apart from the works of the law, the Galatians could do the same. It was evident that Abraham did not get his blessing through the works of the law, for he was blessed more than four hundred years before the law was given. (Gal. 3: 17.) The law was added only until the seed, Christ, should come and then was taken out of the way. (Col. 2: 14; Gal. 3: 23-25.) So Paul reasons that if Abraham could be justified by faith apart from the law before the law was given, the Galatians could be justified by faith apart from the law after the law was taken away. This being true, they were foolish for giving up the faith on account of which both Abraham and they were justified to go back to the law that had nothing to do with their justification or that of Abraham.

It was reckoned unto him for righteousness. The word "it" refers not to the act of believing, but to the belief, faith, of Abraham. This does not mean that faith takes the place of righteous living; that God will allow one to live in ungodliness and accept his faith as being worth as much as a godly life. The Greek word translated *reckoned* is translated by a number of English words in the New Testament. Paul's use of the word in another place will help us to see its meaning here. He said no one stood with him at his first defense, or trial, and prayed. "May it not be laid to their account." (2 Tim. 4: 16.) The words *be laid to their account* come from this Greek word. Paul did not want their failure to stand by him in his trial to be laid to their account in order to their condemnation. So in our text Paul says Abraham's belief was laid to his account, credited to him, in order to his justification. The word *for* in our text is from the Greek preposition *eis* and means "in order to obtain." The word *righteousness* in our text means justification, or "acquittal from sin, with subsequent

recognition and treatment as just." (Lard.) So when Abraham's faith was reckoned to him for righteousness, we are to understand that his belief was laid to his account, he was given credit for his belief, in order that he might obtain justification, or to be acquitted from sin and receive recognition and treatment as a just man.

Know therefore that they that are of faith. They that have the same faith of Abraham, a faith in Christ apart from the works of the law, the same are the sons of Abraham. His children are not reckoned after the flesh any longer, but after the faith. Those having the same faith as Abraham are the seed of Abraham, whether they be Jew or Gentile.

The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles. Paul personifies the scriptures, the Old Testament, and speaks of them as foreseeing certain events because they foretell them. Of course, it was God who foresaw and through the scriptures foretold these events. That which was foretold in this instance was the justification of the Gentiles by faith, emphasis being placed on the fact that this justification was to be on account of their faith and not on account of their doing the works of the law.

Preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham. We must not think the gospel was preached to Abraham in the same fullness in which it is preached to us. Good news was preached to Abraham, and that good news was, "In thee shall all the nations be blessed." Paul uses this statement to prove that the Gentiles were included in the promise of blessings to all who have the faith of Abraham. McGarvey thinks Paul meant to say, "In thee shall all the Gentiles be blessed." The Greek has only one word for *nations* and *Gentiles*, and we depend on the context to determine which word to put in the translation. But the emphasis is on the word *all*, showing that the Gentiles are included in the promise. Sometimes the word *families* is used in the promise (Gen. 12: 3), where the word *Gentiles* could not be substituted without doing violence to the scriptures.

So then they that are of faith. They that are of faith, regardless of whether they be Jew or Gentile, are blessed with the faithful Abraham. Since all nations are to be justified by faith, it follows that the Jews

from Pentecost to Cornelius were justified by faith. There is a doctrine among religious teachers of today which says that Jews from Pentecost to Cornelius were saved by repenting and being baptized for the remission of their sins; but since Cornelius people are saved by faith alone. But Paul wrote this letter after the conversion of Cornelius, and evidently he knew of no such difference in God's way of saving Jews and Gentiles. Both are saved by a faith like that of Abraham, a faith which received God's word, feared God, and obeyed the commandments of God.

III. Blessing Made Possible Through Death of Christ (Gal. 3: 10-14)

For as many as are of the works of the law. In verses 9 and 10 Paul draws a contrast: they that are of faith are blessed, they that are of the works of the law are cursed. He has used the example of Abraham's justification to prove the first part of his contrast, and he now proceeds to prove from scripture the latter part of the contrast.

Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things. Paul only gives the sense of the Old Testament passage which reads, "Cursed be he that confirmeth not the words of this law to do them." (Deut. 27: 26a.) Paul's statement is a commentary on the law, showing that in order for one to be justified by the works of the law that one must *continue in all* that the law required of him. Since this demands absolute sinless perfection, it is obvious that no one can expect to be justified by the works of the law. (Rom. 3: 10, 23.)

The righteous shall live by faith. Paul draws two arguments from the Old Testament. The first one is based on the curse pronounced upon the man who fails to do all that is demanded by the law. The second argument is based on the fact that the Old Testament does not teach a system of justification by works of law, but a system of justification by faith. The law of Moses was not given as a means of justification, or as a system by which men could be justified. Paul says, "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have been of the law. But the scripture shut up all things under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." (Gal.

3: 21, 22.) If the law could have given life, people would have been justified by the law; but since the law could not give life, there was no justification by the works of the law. Then Paul quotes Habakkuk to prove that the Old Testament taught that life is promised only to those who are justified by faith. (See treatment of golden text, Lesson III.)

And the law is not of faith. The law is a system of works not designed to give life; its purpose was to make people conscious of sin and their need of a Saviour, and so bring them to Christ that they might be justified by faith. (Gal. 3: 23, 24; Rom. 7: 7-13.) The law says life is gained by doing all demanded therein and cursed is the man who fails to do so; but the "righteousness which is of faith" says the believer is saved. The student should study Rom. 10: 4-13 in this connection. While the believer is an obedient believer, he does not rest upon perfect obedience for his life, but upon his faith in Christ and the atonement made by him.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law. The Galatians were about to turn back to the law which pronounced a curse upon them. To do this they were forsaking Christ who died to redeem them from the curse of the law to which they would return. This emphasizes the foolishness of their action. They would leave the very Christ who redeemed them from the curse of the law to go back under that which brought the curse upon them.

Having become a curse for us. Paul does not leave them to guess how Christ redeemed them from the curse of the law. He tells them that this was done by Christ becoming a curse for them. The law pronounced a curse upon them, but Christ became that curse in their stead. This is another way of saying that he suffered in their place for their sins. Then Paul tells us how Jesus became a curse, that is, by being hanged on a tree, being crucified. In Gal. 4: 4 Paul explains that Jesus became a curse for them that he might redeem them from the curse in order that they might receive the adoption of sons. This simply means that they might no longer be children held in bondage, but that they might be full-grown sons, heirs, in the family of God. As long as they were under the law and its curse, they could not receive the adoption of sons, so

Jesus died that he might redeem them from the curse of the law and give them sonship. Those who claim the church was established before the death of Jesus must affirm that its membership was composed of people who were still under the curse of the law and who for that reason had not received the adoption of sons.

That upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham. This is another purpose of the death of Jesus Christ. The Gentiles could not receive the blessing of Abraham, forgiveness of sins in Christ, through the works of the law; this blessing could be obtained and enjoyed only in Christ and on account of his

death. To turn back to the law would be to make it impossible for them to receive the blessing of Abraham; only in Jesus and through his gospel could this blessing be obtained by Gentiles.

That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. The "promise of the Spirit" means the promised Spirit. This refers back to verses 2 and 5, where Paul asked if they received the Spirit through the works of the law or through obedience to the gospel. Jesus died that the Gentiles and Jews might receive the Spirit through faith, an obedient faith in Christ; it could not be received by doing the works of the law.

Lessons to Learn

1. Our blessings come to us through a system of faith and on account of our faith, not through a system of law and on account of our keeping of the law. We are not blessed according to what we deserve, but according to the riches of his grace toward us in Christ Jesus.

2. The faith of Abraham is an example for us to imitate, (a) He had a faith that accepted God's word at face value without doubting in the face of seemingly impossible circumstances; (b) that feared God to the point of submitting to God's way in-

stead of having his own; (c) that obeyed the commandments of God in spite of the cost.

3. The death of Christ makes it possible for us to receive and enjoy the blessings promised through the seed of Abraham. We need to think more about his death and what it means to us. That was the central theme of gospel preaching with the apostles, and we should learn better to use that theme to get the attention of sinners and melt their hearts into submission to his will.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of this lesson?
Repeat the golden text from memory.
Give the time, places and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

Name three distinct types of believers and show which belongs to Christ.

In what ways do both saint and sinner belong to Christ?

In what ways does the saint belong to Christ that is not true of the sinner?

Explain how Paul proved Christ to be the seed mentioned in the promise to Abraham.

What right do we have to claim to be the seed of Abraham?

Who is the real Jew today?

What is real circumcision?

When and how does this circumcision take place in us?

What is the blessing of Abraham in Christ?

How was this blessing made available to us?

What connection does the gospel have with this blessing of Abraham in Christ?

Blessings Through Faith, Not Law

To what does Paul attribute the apostasy of the Galatians?

How had Jesus been set forth crucified among them?

What is meant by receiving of the Spirit and the hearing of faith?

What was Paul's point in asking this question?

What is meant by their beginning in the Spirit?

To what sufferings does Paul refer?

How could they be in vain?

Who supplied the Spirit?

How was the miraculous measure supplied?

How did Paul use this lesson to keep the Galatians from going back under the law?

Abraham Blessed on Account of Faith

Why does Paul use Abraham as an example of justification by faith?

What was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness?

What is the meaning of the words reckoned and righteousness?

Who are the true children of Abraham?

In what sense does the scripture foresee the justification of Gentiles?

What was the gospel preached to Abraham?

What is the meaning of the word "nations" in this promise?

Can you show that both Jews and Gentiles were justified by faith?

Blessing Made Possible Through Death of Christ

How does Paul contrast the law and the faith, or gospel?

What degree of perfection is demanded of one to be justified by works of law?

Was the law of Moses given as a system of justification?

What is meant by "the righteous shall live by faith"?
 What did Paul mean by saying "the law is not of faith"?
 From what did Christ redeem the Jews?
 How was Jesus made a curse and for what purpose?

What blessing is brought to Gentiles by the death of Jesus?
 What is meant by the "promise of the Spirit"?
 Through what is it received?
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson XI—September 11, 1955

THE ALLEGORY OF HAGAR AND SARAH

Lesson Text

Gal. 4: 21-31

21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?

22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, one by the handmaid, and one by the freewoman.

23 Howbeit the *son* by the handmaid is born after the flesh; but the son by the freewoman *is born* through promise.

24 Which things contain an allegory: for these *women* are two covenants; one from mount Si'-nai, bearing children unto bondage, which is Ha'-gar.

25 Now this Ha'-gar is mount SI'-nai in A-ra'-bi-a and answereth to the Je-ru'-sa-lem that now is: for she is in bondage with her children.

26 But the Je-ru'-sa-16m that is above is free, which is our mother.

27 For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not;

Break forth and cry, thou that travailest not:

For more are the children of the desolate than of her that hath the husband.

28 Now we, brethren, as I'-saac was, are children of promise.

29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him *that was born* after the Spirit, so also it is now.

30 Howbeit what saith the scripture? Cast out the handmaid and her son: for the son of the handmaid shall not inherit with the son of the freewoman.

31 Wherefore, brethren, we are not children of a handmaid, but of the freewoman.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise." (Gal. 4: 28.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gal. 4: 1-20.

Daily Bible Readings

- September 5. M..... Sarah's Name (Gen. 17: 15-21)
- September 6. T..... Faithfulness of Sarah (Heb. 11: 11, 1 Pet. 3: 6.)
- September 7. W..... Sarah, Mother of Isaac (Gen. 21: 1-8)
- September 8. T..... Hagar and Ishmael (Gen. 16: 1-15)
- September 9. F..... Circumcision of Abraham and Ishmael (Gen. 17: 22-27)
- September 10. S..... Sarah Drives Hagar and Ishmael Out (Gen. 21: 8-21)
- September 11. S..... Death of Sarah (Gen. 23: 1-20)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACES.—Corinth and Galatia.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints in Galatia.

Golden Text Explained

1. Meaning of the text. Paul tells us that Christians are children of promise in a manner similar to the way Isaac was a child of promise. This cannot mean that we are children of promise in the sense that the promise is our spiritual parent, for Isaac was not a child of promise in that sense. Ishmael is said to have been born after the flesh, but Isaac

was born after the Spirit. (Gal. 4: 29.) Isaac had human, or fleshly, parents the same as did Ishmael. How, then, does Isaac's birth differ from that of Ishmael so as to justify Paul's contrast of the two? First, there was no providential or miraculous intervention by the Lord to make his birth possible. There was such an intervention by the Lord in

the birth of Isaac. Sarah was barren; both she and Abraham were old, past the age when they would naturally expect to have children. (Gen. 18: 9-15; Rom. 4: 18-21.) Second, there was no promise in connection with the birth of Ishmael; he was not born in response to a promise, or to gain blessings held out by promise of the Lord. But such was the case with Isaac. Hence, Ishmael was born after the flesh; Isaac was born after the Spirit. Now, Paul says we who believe in and accept Christ are children of promise in a similar way as was Isaac. This does not mean that the promise is our mother; Jerusalem from above is our mother. (Gal. 4: 26.) But we are born spiritually in connection with a promise, and it is a birth made possible by the Lord. From this we learn (a) that the Jews who are children after the flesh, physical descendants of Abraham, are not by that physical birth the children of God. There was a time when Jews were the people of God because of their physical connection with Abraham, but that time is no longer. "For they are not all Israel, that are of Israel: neither, because they are Abraham's seed, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God; but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed." (Rom. 9:6-8.) (b) We do not become children of God through the law, but through the promise. "For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no more of promise: but God hath granted it to Abraham by promise." (Gal. 3: 18.) Paul emphasized this fact to keep the Galatians from turning away from the gospel of Christ to go back under the law.

2. **Heirs according to promise.** Since we are children of promise and children are rightful heirs, it follows that we are heirs according to promise, (a) We are heirs of forgiveness of sins. Peter told people in Jerusalem they were sons, heirs, of the covenant God made with Abraham when he promised that all families of the earth would be blessed in his seed. And in keeping that promise God had raised up his Servant, Jesus Christ, to bless them in turning them away from their iniquities. (Acts 3: 25, 26.) To turn people away from their iniquities is equal to forgiving them of their sins, for remission of sins follows their

turning from sin. (Isa. 55: 7.) Paul told the people of Antioch in Pisidia that through Jesus Christ we have what the law could not give—the remission of sins. (Acts 13: 38, 39.) Since Jesus is the seed to whom the promise referred (Gal. 3: 16), and we have remission of sins through him, it follows that we have remission of sins through the promise, (b) We are heirs of the gospel of grace rather than of the yoke of the law. Paul says we are not under law, but under grace. (Rom. 6: 14b.) Paul speaks of his message as "the gospel of the grace of God." (Acts 20: 24.) Peter speaks of the law as a yoke which neither he nor his fathers were able to bear. (Acts 15: 10.) Through the fulfillment of the promise according to which we are heirs we no longer live and labor under the "law of sin and death," but enjoy the freedom for which Christ set us free. (Rom. 8: 2; Gal. 5: 1.) (c) We are heirs of eternal life. Eternal life is the climax of all the blessings we get through Christ, the promised seed of Abraham, through whom all nations are to be blessed. Paul says those who are justified by his grace are made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Tit. 3: 7.) Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him. (Heb. 5: 9.) Since he is the promised seed, it follows that we are heirs of eternal life through the fulfillment of that promise. "And this is the promise which he promised us, even the life eternal." (1 John 2: 25.) And Paul tells us that the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 6: 23.)

3. **Some conclusions from the foregoing.** (a) The Jews are not the favored people of God and will not be as long as the gospel is in force. The favored people of God are no longer reckoned after the flesh, for children of the flesh are not the children of God. (Rom. 9: 6-8.) "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly . . . but he is a Jew who is one inwardly." (Rom. 2: 28, 29.) But the favored people are reckoned after the promise. (Rom. 9: 8b; Gal. 3: 29.) We are fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. (Eph. 3: 6, 7.) It follows, therefore, that as long as the gospel is in force people will be partakers of the promised blessings in Christ according to promise and not accord-

ing to the flesh. People who are still expecting God to favor the Jews as he did before Christ must wait until the everlasting gospel is made obsolete. (b) Universal salvation suffers a death blow in this text. In the context we learn that there are some people who are "born after the flesh" and some who are "born after the Spirit." Those who are born after the flesh are not children of God. (Rom. 9: 8.) Those who are not children of God are lost because they are children of the devil. (1 John 3: 9, 10.) The very fact that there are some who are born after the flesh instead of the Spirit is proof that some will be lost. Hence, the doctrine of universal salvation is not true. (c) God's people are spiritual in life and worship. When God's people were born after the flesh, their worship was after carnal ordinances "with meats and drinks and divers washings" (Heb. 9: 10); but now his people are born of the Spirit, and their worship is in spirit and truth. (John 4: 24b.) Paul said of believers in Christ, "We are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." (Phil. 3: 3.) He also says the sons of God are led by the Spirit. (Rom. 8: 14.) If we are led by the Spirit in our worship, it must be spiritual.

I. Historical Setting of the Allegory

(Gal. 4: 21-23)

Ye that desire to be under the law. Though his lesson was for all the brethren of Galatia, Paul directs this portion especially to those who wished to leave Christ and go back under the law of Moses. Many of them had quickly removed from him who had called them into the grace of Christ to another, or perverted, gospel. (Gal. 1: 6.) False teachers had gone among them and troubled them (Gal. 5: 10), desiring to make a "fair show in the flesh" by having Christians submit to circumcision (Gal. 6: 12), and make them debtors to do the whole law and so fall away from the grace of God (Gal. 5: 2-4). Such hindrance by these false teachers kept the Galatians from obeying the truth (Gal. 5: 7), and laid them liable to the punishment of eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord when he comes to be glorified in his saints (2 Thess. 1: 8-10).

Do ye not hear the law? The word *law* is used twice in this verse and

must be given different meanings. To be "under law" is to be subject to the commandments and demands of the law; to be governed by the law as a legal code. But to "hear the law" means to understand what the law teaches. And since this story which Paul uses is in Genesis, chapters 16 and 21, we conclude that Paul regarded the book of Genesis as a part of the law. Sometimes Moses is regarded as giving the law and other writers as the prophets. Abraham told the rich man in Hades that his brothers had "Moses and the prophets." (Luke 16: 29.) This expression meant the whole of the Old Testament. (See Luke 24: 27.) Sometimes the Old Testament was spoken of as being composed of "the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms." (Luke 24: 44.) But in our text "the law" simply means the writings of Moses. Paul implies that, if they "desire to be under the law," they ought to understand and be submissive to the teachings of the law. He then proceeds to teach them the real meaning of the law concerning the two covenants, using the incidents in the lives of Hagar and Sarah and their children to teach the lesson.

It is written, that Abraham had two sons. Of course Abraham had more than two sons before he died (Gen. 25: 1-4), but this story concerns only Ishmael and Isaac, and likely at the time of these incidents these were his only sons. On account of Sarah's inability to bear children, she gave her handmaid, Hagar, to Abraham. (Gen. 16: 1-6.) About thirteen years later, God gave Sarah power to conceive and bear a son in fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham when he came into Canaan twenty-four years previous to this time. (Gen. 12: 1-4; 18: 9-15.) The promise was made at least fourteen years before the birth of Ishmael so some think Sarah despaired of the fulfillment through her, except as she might have a son through her handmaid.

The son by the handmaid is born after the flesh. This refers to Hagar's son, Ishmael. The birth of Ishmael was not a part of God's arrangement in the unfolding of his promises and purposes to bless the world through Abraham and his seed. According to the standards of the day, Abraham and Sarah did nothing wrong in getting a son through this arrangement.

Hagar was not the only concubine Abraham had. (Gen. 25: 6.) Hagar seems to have been the personal slave of Sarah, her handmaid, so that any child she might have by Abraham would be the property of Sarah. (Gen. 16: 6.) Evidently Sarah thought this was the only way she could ever have a son, for she said, "Jehovah hath restrained me from bearing; go in, I pray thee, unto my handmaid; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." (Gen. 16: 2.) The expression "born after the flesh" simply means that his birth was not in connection with the promise of God and that there was no special intervention of God to make his birth possible; it was wholly in harmony with the law of natural procreation.

The son by the freewoman is born through promise. This refers to Sarah's son, Isaac. His birth was in fulfillment of certain promises made to Abraham. The first promise was that Abraham should have a son, but the mother was not mentioned. (Gen. 12: 1-3; 15: 4, 5.) Later the promise was made to include Sarah, completely ignoring the son of the handmaid. (Gen. 18: 9-15.) The slavery of Hagar and the freedom of Sarah are stressed that a foundation may be laid for a lesson in the application of the allegory. The sons would naturally partake of the position and station in life which the mothers held. Since Ishmael was born of a slave, he would be a slave; and since Isaac was born of a free-woman, he would be a freeman. This will be of use to show that all who are born of the covenants represented by these women will partake of the nature of the covenants. The slave covenant will produce slave children, and the free covenant will produce free children. This is the lesson Paul wishes his Galatian converts to learn, so they will no longer wish to go back under the old covenant, but enjoy the freedom of the new covenant.

II. Significance of This History (Gal. 4: 24-27)

Which things contain an allegory. An "allegory is prolonged metaphor, in which typically a series of actions are symbolic of other actions." (Webster.) The fact that this story of Abraham, his wives and sons is so used by Paul does not discredit the historicity of the story. The in-

cidents related were real, just as real as if they had not contained an allegory, or were incapable of being so used by later writers. But we have an indication of the inspiration of the Old Testament scriptures in this allegory. Paul says the Old Testament was written for our examples and admonition. (1 Cor. 10: 6, 11.) Moses, unaided by inspiration, would not know enough about the future of God's dealings with his people to include such things as could be used to teach them the lessons they would need under the new covenant. So he must have been guided by the Lord to include such historical material as would serve our purposes.

These women are two covenants. The word *women* is not in the Greek. King James Version did not supply it. Barnes, following the Authorized Version, did not see that Paul had the women in mind, so he says the sons are the covenants instead of the mothers. Of course the women are not really the covenants, but they represent them; they are types of the covenants. This form of expression is common in scripture. Jesus said, "This is my body," and we know that the bread was not literally his body. Paul said that rock which followed the children of Israel in the wilderness was Christ, but we know that it only represented, or typified, Christ. (1 Cor. 10: 4.)

One from mount Sinai. This refers to the covenant God made with Israel when he delivered them from the bondage of Egypt. Moses said he stayed with God forty days and nights on Sinai and that he "wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments." (Ex. 34: 27, 28.) Again he said, "Jehovah gave me two tables of stone, even the tables of the covenant." (Deut. 9: 11.) From these and similar passages we learn that the covenant made at Sinai consisted of the ten commandments as well as the laws and ceremonies enacted upon them. The religious world generally refuses to accept the plain force of these scriptures, insisting that the ten commandments are still in force as given on Sinai. They fail to see that Jesus included all the moral principles of the ten commandments in his new covenant, but left out the law with reference to the sabbath.

Bearing children unto bondage. Paul says this covenant is represented by Hagar, the slave mother, and

its children are born into bondage. This was to discourage them from going back under that covenant which God made with his people at Sinai. Peter referred to it as a yoke which people could not bear. Paul exhorted them not to be "entangled again in a yoke of bondage." (Gal. 5: 1.) It was a ministration of death (2 Cor. 3: 7); a law of sin and death (Rom. 8: 2).

Hagar is mount Sinai . . . Jerusalem that now is. Here again we have that bold form of expression. Surely Hagar was not a mountain, but in this allegory she represents the mountain in Arabia, Sinai, where Moses received the old covenant. Paul says that Sinai "*answereth to the Jerusalem that now is.*" The word translated *answereth means* "to stand in the same rank," "to belong to the same category." Jerusalem is to later history of the Jews what Sinai in Arabia was to their earlier history. Sinai was the source of the law covenant with its yoke of bondage; but Jerusalem had replaced Sinai as the source of authority, and the Jews no longer looked upon Sinai as the place of authority; they looked upon Jerusalem in that light. Jerusalem had to be tied in with the old covenant to get the lesson across, and Paul represents that city as replacing Sinai, or standing in the same category as Sinai.

She is in bondage with her children. She refers to the Jerusalem that now is. Her children are those who accept the old covenant administered from Jerusalem. The bondage mentioned here is the impossible demands of the law which had no atoning sacrifice to cover the mistakes of those who lived under that covenant. It was the coming of certain men from James, who lived in Jerusalem, which caused Peter to make his mistake at Antioch. (Gal. 2: 12.) It was certain men from Judea, of which Jerusalem was capital, that caused the trouble in Antioch which resulted in the Jerusalem conference. (Acts 15: 1ff.) So Jerusalem was considered the center of Jewry, the source of Judaistic authority. And all those who submitted to that authority were in bondage to her. Paul did not wish to see his converts go back into this realm of authority.

Jerusalem, that is above is free. Paul contrasts the two sources of authority, one on the earth bringing

into bondage all who submit to her, while the other is above and gives spiritual freedom to all who are associated with her. So it became simply a question whether people wished to be in bondage or be free. If they wished to be in bondage, they should attach themselves to earthly Jerusalem and the covenant administered from that city; but if they wished to enjoy spiritual freedom, they should attach themselves to the heavenly Jerusalem and the new covenant administered from that place.

For *it is written.* Paul quotes a passage from Isa. 54: 1, which suits his purpose here. It pictures two women, wives of the same husband; one is barren and the other is fruitful. The barren woman has been sorrowing, while the fruitful woman has been regarding herself as superior to the barren. But in the providence of God the woman who has been barren is so no longer, and her children will far outnumber those of the one who has been fruitful from the first. So Paul indicates that the children of the new covenant will far exceed in number the children of the old covenant.

III. Applications of the Allegory (Gal. 4: 28-31)

We . . . are children of promise. Isaac was the son of the freewoman and entitled to all the privileges of the freedom into which he was brought by his mother. Ishmael was the son of the bondswoman and consigned to all the limitations and restrictions of the bondage into which he was brought by his mother. Abraham could have adopted him and made him a free man, but according to the history such was not done; and if it had been done, this incident could not have been used by Paul to teach this lesson. As said before, we are not children of the promise in the sense of the promise being our mother; but we are children of promise in that our spiritual birth is in harmony with God's promise and made possible by it. The promise is the seed out of which comes the gospel by which we are begotten, or born, again.

He *that was born after the flesh.* Ishmael was born after the flesh in that his birth was wholly by natural processes without intervention of the Lord by promise or providential assistance. It should be remembered

that his being born after the flesh had nothing to do with his character or his chances of going to heaven. Neither did Isaac's birth after the Spirit have anything to do with his character or his chances to go to heaven. His birth after the Spirit simply means that God promised his birth and made his mother able to conceive and bear him in her old age.

Persecuted him that was born after the Spirit. This refers to the fact that Ishmael *mocked*, tormented or tantalized, Isaac. This continued until the time to wean Isaac. At that time Sarah asserted her rights and demanded that Abraham send Hagar and Ishmael away. (Gen. 21: 8ff.) That the word *mocking* of the Genesis account means more than simple playing, as suggested by some and contained in the margin, is made certain by Paul's use of the word *persecute*. Then Paul goes on to make the application of this part of his allegory. As in the story that the son after the flesh persecuted the son after the Spirit, so the children of the old covenant, made at Sinai and administered from Jerusalem, persecute the children of the new covenant based upon the promise made to Abraham and administered from heaven. Paul tells them they will not only be identified with a covenant of bondage, but with a covenant which breeds persecution of those born after the Spirit if they go back to the old law.

Cast out the handmaid and her son. These are the words of Sarah to Abraham on the occasion of Ishmael's mocking Isaac on the wean-feast day. Her reason for demanding that Ishmael be cast out was that it was not

right for the slave to inherit with the free-born. Some think there was some racial and social prejudice entering into Sarah's actions, but since God agreed with Sarah and told Abraham to accede to her demands, we are inclined to discount that possibility. We simply do not know what was the basis of Sarah's demand. The sons of Abraham by Keturah were treated in somewhat the same manner. We are told that they were given gifts and sent away. (Gen. 25: 6.) God did not forsake Ishmael, for he promised him that he would make a great nation of him. (Gen. 21: 18.) Undoubtedly this action was brought about and recorded, not for their sakes who were involved in these incidents, but that this lesson might be taught. This part of the allegory simply says to the Galatians that, if they go back to the law and its bondage, they will not be allowed to inherit eternal life with the children of the new covenant. If they insist on putting themselves in the category of slaves, they need not be surprised that they will be deprived of the blessings of the freeborn.

Wherefore, brethren, we are not children of a handmaid. This is Paul's conclusion of his argument by allegory. We who have accepted Jesus Christ, the promised seed of Abraham, are not slaves born of a slave mother; we are free people, born of a freewoman. They would not throw away their social and political freedom, surely they should value their religious, spiritual, freedom more highly and refuse to throw it away. But people can be more concerned about their material prosperity than their spiritual welfare.

Lessons to Learn

1. The importance of a knowledge of the Old Testament is emphasized in Paul's use of it in this lesson. Those who do not study the Old Testament will be unable to teach many helpful lessons which children of God need to enable them to do what is right.

2. Paul's use of historical events to teach lessons by allegory should not be taken as license to all to attempt to turn every historical event into an allegory to teach a lesson for Christians under the new covenant. Uninspired allegorical interpretation

of Old Testament scriptures has led to many false and foolish doctrines in the past.

3. Freedom in Christ is a great improvement over the bondage of the law. But we must not mistake freedom in Christ for license to do as we please in spite of what God teaches us to do. Nor does freedom from bondage of the law mean that we can go to heaven in spite of willful or negligent ignorance of what God expects of us so long as we intend to be good.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

What did Paul mean by saying that Ishmael was born after the flesh?

What is meant by Isaac being born after the Spirit?

In what sense are we children of promise?

From this lesson what do we learn of the standing of Jews with relation to God?

What lesson do we learn with reference to the relation of law and promise?

What three things do we hear as children of promise?

Can you show that the Jews will not be the favored people of God as long as the gospel is in force?

What do we learn about the doctrine of universal salvation from our text?

What do we learn from our text about the life and worship of God's people?

Historical Setting of the Allegory

To what class of people is the allegory especially addressed?

To what does Paul contribute the unsettled condition of the Galatians?

What two meanings has the word law in this text?

To what portion of the Old Testament does the word law refer?

What are other portions?

How many sons did Abraham have?

How many wives and concubines?

How many years from the time the promise was made until the birth of Isaac?

What was the relationship between Hagar and Sarah?

What was Sarah's purpose in giving Hagar to Abraham as wife?

Why is the slavery of Hagar and the freedom of Sarah stressed?

Significance of This History

What is an allegory?

What effect does this have on the historicity of the story?

Can you show that Paul's use of this history implies the inspiration of Moses?

What do the two women of the allegory represent?

What do the sons represent?

What was the covenant made at Sinai?

Which woman stands for it?

What is the spiritual condition of the children of the covenant made at Sinai?

How is Jerusalem related to Sinai?

Why did Paul so relate that city?

Who were the children of Jerusalem?

What was their spiritual condition?

What was Paul's purpose in stressing this bondage of the children of Jerusalem?

Who is the mother of the children of promise?

What prophet does Paul quote?

For what purpose?

Applications of the Allegory

To what privileges are we entitled by right of being children of promise?

What effect did being born after the flesh have on Ishmael's character and destiny?

Did Isaac's birth after the Spirit assure him of eternal salvation?

What do you know of the relationship between Ishmael and Isaac?

What use did Paul make of this trouble between the boys in his allegory?

What demand did Sarah make of Abraham?

What use does Paul make of this in the allegory?

What is Paul's conclusion from his allegory?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson XII—September 18, 1955

FREEDOM IN CHRIST

Lesson Text

Gal. 5: 1-15

1 For freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage.

2 Behold, I Paul say unto you, that, if ye receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing.

3 Yea, I testify again to every man that receiveth circumcision, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.

4 Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace.

5 For we through the Spirit by faith wait for the hope of righteousness.

6 For in Christ Je'-sus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love.

7 Ye were running well; who hindered you that ye should not obey the truth?

8 This persuasion *came* not of him that calleth you.

9 A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

10 I have confidence to youward in the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.

11 But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? then hath the stumbling-block of the cross been done away.

12 I would that they that unsettle you would even go beyond circumcision.

13 For ye, brethren, were called

for freedom; only *use* not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another.

14 For the whole law is fulfilled in

GOLDEN TEXT.—*“For freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage ”* (Gal. 5: 1.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—Gal. 5: 16-25.

one word, *even* in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

Daily Bible Readings

- September 12. M.....Freedom Through Christ (John 8: 31-36)
- September 13. T.....Freedom from Sin and Death (Rom. 5: 15-18)
- September 14. W.....Freedom Through the Spirit of Life (Rom. 8: 1-16)
- September 15. T.....Freedom Not License (1 Pet. 2: 1-16)
- September 16. F.....Freedom Through Death to Sin (Rom. 6: 1-11)
- September 17. S.....All Blessings in Christ (Eph. 1: 1-3)
- September 18. S.....Servants of Sins (Rom. 6: 18-22)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACES.—Corinth and Galatia.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints in Galatia.

Golden Text Explained

1. Freedom which Christ gives, (a) Freedom in Christ defined. Webster says freedom is “exemption from necessity, in choice and action.” It is the power to determine for one’s self what he shall or shall not do. Webster says freedom and liberty are often interchanged, and defines liberty as “freedom from external restraint or compulsion.” We raise the question, Does man have freedom? Is man at liberty to determine for himself what he shall do or not do in religion? We grant that there is such freedom, that it is possible for man to so exercise himself; but we deny that man can be pleasing to God and exercise such freedom. Our subject is “Freedom in Christ” and the phrase “in Christ” limits the freedom which we enjoy. The will of God, the commandments of the Lord, have a place in our lives and must be respected if we expect to be saved. Yet, there is still a possibility of our doing all we wish to do and only what we wish to do. God said he would put his laws into our mind and write them on our heart. (Heb. 8: 10b.) To write the law on our heart means both to give us the information as to what we should do and the desire to do it. A law is not written on my heart until I desire to do it and love the doing of it. When I am so thoroughly converted to the likeness of Christ that I genuinely love to do what he wants me to do and abhor with all my soul what he forbids me to do, I will enjoy perfect liberty, freedom, to do as I please. God

does not mechanically, or by direct operation of the Holy Spirit, give me instantly a full-grown passionate desire to do his will or a perfect love for the doing of it, but he does not give me the motive and incentive and dwells within my heart to encourage and strengthen me in the inward man that I may be filled with all his fullness. (Eph. 3: 16-19.) (b) Freedom from what? First, we have freedom from the bondage of sin. (Rom. 6: 12-14.) Next, we have freedom from conscience concerning sins in the past. (Heb. 9: 14; 10: 19.) Next, we have deliverance from the wrath of God which is to be manifested against all sin and ungodliness. (Rom. 2: 4-10; 1 Thess. 1: 10; Heb. 10: 27.) Next, we are delivered from the tyranny of Satan. (Heb. 2: 14, 15; 2 Tim. 2: 26.) And, last, we are delivered from the bondage of human ordinances. (John 8: 32; Gal. 4: 10, 11; 1 Cor. 7: 23.) (c) The purpose of freedom in Christ. Our text says Christ set us free “for freedom.” By this is meant that Christ freed us that we might “cherish and enjoy our freedom.” Freedom is valued by many above life itself; it is not to be neglected, abused, or frittered away as a worthless possession, but is to be prized, cherished, and enjoyed.

2. Exhortation to steadfastness, (a) Since freedom in Christ is a thing to be valued highly, protected with our lives, and enjoyed to the fullest, we should stand fast in our hold upon it and fight every encroachment and infringement of that liberty.

These Galatians were allowing false teachers to lead them back into the bondage of the law of Moses. Giving up the new covenant with its soul-cleansing blood to go back to the old covenant with the blood of animals which could not take away sins meant not only to be severed from Christ and all the benefits to be derived from his death, but to be deprived of all the blessings made possible through his living and interceding for us at the right hand of the Father. So it was for their own good that Paul exhorted them to stand fast, (b) This exhortation was for the glory of Christ. If they left Christ to go back to the law, they would tread under their feet the Son of God and count the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified an unholy thing and would do despite to the Spirit of grace. (Heb. 10: 29.) One cannot forsake Christ without casting reflections upon him and doing him an injustice. One cannot refuse to obey his commandments without declaring him unworthy of love and respect. Peter did his Lord an injustice when he denied him. He reproached the name of Christ and weakened the hands of the faithful when he failed to stand fast for the freedom in Christ at Antioch. (Gal. 2: 11-14.) But Paul brought honor and glory to the name of Christ when he stood steadfast for the truth of the gospel and declared he would magnify Christ in his body whether in life or in death. (Phil. 1: 20.) (c) We are to stand fast in our freedom for the sake of others. When we stand fast, we encourage and strengthen others, but when we falter and give up the freedom for which Christ died, we weaken their hands, rob them of their courage, and make insecure the foundation on which they stand. Peter's failure to stand fast caused other disciples, even Barnabas, to be carried away with the dissimulation. (Gal.

2: 13.) So our obligation to others makes it necessary that we stand fast in the freedom we enjoy in Christ.

3. The yoke of bondage. (a) It entangles. Paul warned the Galatians not to be entangled again in the yoke of bondage, which was the law of Moses with all its rites and ceremonies. The word entangle comes from a word which means to be caught and held in a trap, a mesh, or net. There were so many rites and ceremonies connected with the law that it was almost impossible for the priests to know them all and rightly observe them. The common man had little conception of his duty with reference to all the offerings and sacrifices he was to make and how they were to be made, (b) It enslaves. The very fact that Paul called it a "yoke of bondage" suggests the enslavement which the law wrought upon those who were under it. Of course the moral precepts of the law were no more enslaving than the same moral precepts of the gospel, so we conclude that it was the rites and ceremonies to which Paul referred. And we see a minimum of such "outward ordinances" in the gospel of Christ. Herein is one demonstration of the freedom under the gospel which people under the law did not have. We are not a slave to forms such as the multitudinous offerings and sacrifices of the law. The religious world is rapidly enslaving itself to such forms, especially the Roman Catholic Church and some of her daughters who are not far removed from her in practice of rites and ceremonies, (c) It dwarfs the soul. Such bondage to rites and ceremonies which put from above spirit exalts formality above spirituality, gives the inward man little attention and no encouragement to grow. There is no food for the soul in formalities and little more exercise, so it never grows in stature and strength.

Exposition of the Text

I. Works of Law Severed from Christ (Gal. 5: 1-4)

For freedom did Christ set us free. Being about to go back to that from which Christ had made them free, these Galatians needed to be encouraged to realize the value of their freedom so that they might cherish and enjoy it as a gift from Christ. And we should remember that Christ

died on the cross that we might have freedom from sin and freedom from the necessity of either living such a perfect life that God would be obligated to take us into heaven with him or doing such meritorious works as would atone for our own sins.

Be not entangled again. The law to which they were about to return was a mesh of rites and ceremonies

in which the untaught would become so hopelessly entangled that he could have no peace of mind or satisfaction from his worship. But the new covenant is free from such entangling systems of rites and ceremonies so that each man can be his own priest to approach God through Christ with the minimum of forms and they so simple and easy that the untaught can perform each to the extent of his ability in a manner pleasing to God.

If ye receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing. This statement has bothered some since they know that Paul had Timothy circumcised. (Acts 16: 3.) Paul is speaking of receiving circumcision as was taught by the false teachers in Galatia, as a thing essential to salvation. Paul did not have Timothy circumcised in order to be saved, or as a sign that he was entering the old covenant; he had him circumcised because it would make him more acceptable to the Jews among whom he was to work, give him a better hearing, and make it possible for him to save many who would not receive him if he were not circumcised. Receiving circumcision as a demand of the old covenant signified one's acceptance of the covenant of works for justification as opposed to accepting Christ and the covenant of grace for justification. One who did that declared he did not need Christ.

He is a debtor to do the whole law. Circumcision is one point of the law. He who does one point of the law to be saved recognizes the law as a means of justification, so he is obligated to keep every point of the law. If one point of the law is necessary, consistency demands that we recognize all commandments of the law as binding. Circumcision was a national sign worn by the nation of Israel. To receive that sign was to identify oneself with that nation which God rejected because it rejected the righteousness of God and crucified the Son of God. (Rom. 10: 3; 1 Thess. 2: 15, 16.)

Ye are severed from Christ. To sever means to disconnect; those severed from Christ have no connection with Christ. Those who have no connection with the life-giving Christ can have no spiritual life. This is a reason for saying in verse 2 that Christ would be of no profit to them. Certainly he is of no profit to one who refuses to have any connection

with him. As the vine is of no profit to the severed branch, so Christ is of no profit to the one who seeks justification under the law. Justification through law means justification through one's meritorious works. Opposed to this method of justification is justification by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. (Eph. 2: 8), on account of his death in our behalf (Rom. 3: 23-28). The two systems cannot be reconciled, nor can they be mixed so that one can be justified by using a part of both

Ye are fallen away from grace The word *grace* here means acceptance with God, a state or condition of favor with God. Paul says we have had our access into this state of favor with God through faith, not through works of the law, not through meritorious work either of the law of Moses or any other law. (Rom. 5: 2; Eph. 2: 5-9.) To fall from grace implies that one has been in this state of favor, but has left it for some reason. The reason here stated is that they were leaving the system of justification by grace through faith in Christ and his atoning death to go back to the system of justification by meritorious works. Calvinism says that one cannot fall away from grace, which is equal to saying that one cannot turn away from Christ to go back to the law. But if one cannot do such, why was Paul so concerned about the welfare of these Galatians? If it was impossible for them to do the thing which would cause them to fall away from grace, Paul wasted a lot of time, effort, and energy writing them and praying for them and being anxious about them until Christ be formed in them. (Gal. 4: 19.) The idea that God warns us not to do a thing which is utterly impossible is utter folly; the only reason why he warns us about falling from grace is the fact that such a thing is possible.

II. Sundry Matters of Interest (Gai.

5: 5-12)

For we through the Spirit by faith wait. The word *we* refers to all who abide in Christ as opposed to all others who turn from Christ to find justification in the old covenant of works. Through the leading by teaching of the Holy Spirit and the encouragement of his indwelling we are led to exercise our faith in waiting for the hope which accompanies justification by faith. Those who

turn back to the law for their justification have no such hope; they can only have doubts and fears because of their inability to offer perfect works for their justification. The hope of those justified by faith is eternal life. (Rom. 8: 23-25.)

Faith working through love. Paul starts this verse by saying that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything in Christ. There is no merit in being circumcised; neither is there any merit in being uncircumcised. Since circumcision was the badge of national Judaism, Paul is teaching us that there is no blessing or profit in being a son of Abraham after the flesh. And this will be true as long as men are saved by faith in Jesus Christ and on account of his shed blood. The thing that avails, or secures a blessing in Christ, is a faith that works through love. A faith which does not work is dead and of no value. (James 2: 14-24.) But some are so opposed to *works* having anything to do with our salvation that they reject this teaching. There are two kinds of works—God's works and man's works. When we obey God, we do his works; when we follow man's teachings, we do man's works. A faith that obeys God in the spirit of love will secure the blessing in Christ. It should be remembered that the blessing is secured by faith, not works; works only make perfect the faith by which the blessing is secured.

Ye were running well. Paul views the Christian life as a race course, and these to whom he was writing were running the race well. This is indisputable proof that they were children of God, so Paul was afraid children of God would fall away from grace. He asks them who had hindered them that they should not obey the truth. From this we learn that failing to obey the truth was their sin. But we have seen in previous verses that turning back to the law was their fault. So we conclude that turning back to the law is the same as failing to obey the truth. And a faith that works by love secures the blessing in Christ; obeying the truth secures the blessing; so a faith that works by love is a faith that obeys the truth. And Paul continues to inform them that such persuasion, or influence, does not come from the one who had called them that is, from God. (Gal. 1: 6; 2 Tim. 1: 9.)

A little leaven leaveth the whole lump. The Galatians were liable to think Paul was too much concerned over conditions in the church which did not seem serious to them. Either there were only a few who were affected with this trend, or they might regard circumcision so small a part of the law that they would think Paul unduly exercised about their condition. He reminds them that an evil influence is like leaven in that a small amount of it is capable of working and spreading until the whole community is affected. Leaven may be used to illustrate the way either good or evil spreads. We sometimes think preachers unduly alarmed over trends (and that is possible), but it is also possible that they realize more than some others that a little trend can become a big apostasy if it is left to work unhindered among the church.

I have confidence to you-ward in the Lord. Paul now expresses his confidence in the brethren to follow his instruction and to take such measures as are necessary to rid the church of that influence which would carry them into apostasy. The phrase *in the Lord*, modifies confidence, showing that his confidence was from the Lord, could be attributed to the Lord. And this confidence in them was to the effect that they would see the matter as he saw it. He expected this letter to have the desired effect.

He that troubleth you shall bear his judgment. Paul suggests that the one who was troubling them was not really one of them, he was from the outside. He expresses confidence that they will take steps to discipline him in such way as to cause him to bear his judgment, regardless of his person or station.

If I still preach circumcision. It is clearly implied in this verse that Paul is answering the accusation by his enemies that he preached circumcision. We are not told on what grounds such an accusation is made, but we may suppose it was because he had Timothy circumcised, and his enemies used that as proof of their accusation to weaken his arguments against them. Paul does not stop to deny their charge, but asks two questions which effectively answer it. (a) Why am I still persecuted? The Jews would not have persecuted Paul if he had preached circumcision as necessary to justification, (b) Why is the cross still a stumbling block? If

the cross as I preach it permits of circumcision as a means of justification, why is that preaching a stumbling block to the Jews? The fact that the Jews still persecuted him and that they still rejected the story of the cross was sufficient answer to their accusation that Paul preached circumcision.

I would that they that unsettle you. This verse has given trouble to commentators. McGarvey says, "If those who trouble you insist on mutilating themselves, I wish they would go further and cut themselves entirely off from the church." Barnes agrees with this interpretation, but others contend that the verb translated *go beyond circumcision* is used of the mutilation mentioned in Deut. 23: 1.

III. Freedom Versus License (Gal. 5: 13-15)

For ye . . . were called for freedom. God called them that they might enjoy freedom. If they turn back to the law, they will make impossible the very thing for which God called them. Furthermore, they should not allow troublemakers to keep them in an unsettled condition because they cannot in such condition, or state of mind, enjoy that freedom to which they had been called.

Use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh. The word *use* is in italics in the text, which shows there is no Greek word for it. The thought might be clearer if we read, "You were called for freedom, but not such freedom as permits indulgence in the lusts of the flesh. You were called for freedom, but not for license. This shows that Paul's conception of Christian liberty does not free one from obedience to the commandments of Jesus Christ. There is a strong trend in some sections of the country to charge with the "heresy of legalism" those of us who contend that obedience to certain commandments of Christ are essential to salvation. They contend that, if we must obey certain commandments in order to be saved, we are still under law as much as were the Jews under the old covenant. But Paul says in our text that freedom in Christ does not give us license to disobey Jesus Christ. Then our "anti-legalist" comes back with a plea for mercy on the ignorant person who thinks sprinkling will do for baptism if one is sincerely seeking to please God. He forgets that Paul says ignorance

alienates us from the life of God (Eph. 4: 18), and that Peter says the ignorant and unsteadfast wrest the scriptures to their own destruction (2 Pet. 3: 16). Those who know not God and obey not the gospel are lost. (2 Thess. 1: 8, 9.)

Through love be servants one to another. In this verse Paul shows that one can have freedom in Christ and still be a slave to others. If he loves his neighbor, he can do all God requires of him in behalf of his neighbor and still have perfect freedom. If one can have freedom in Christ and be a servant of his neighbor, certainly he can have freedom in Christ and still be a servant of God, doing the will of God. If he loves God with all his heart, doing the will of God will not be "doing so much work for so many blessings," but the spontaneous expression of love in harmony with the revealed will of God. We are not to be driven like slaves to obey a certain number of commandments in order to reap a certain number of rewards at the end of a dreary life; but we are shown by his commandments what is his will, what will please him, and we are impelled through a sense of love and gratitude for him who has done so much for us, as well as through a genuine delight in occupying our minds and bodies in the doing of such things, to work and worship according to his revealed will as well as to refrain from the things which he has said will displease him. Such a view permits of implicit obedience to every commandment of the Lord and to view such obedience as essential to our salvation, yet it excludes the idea of legalistic compliance with "so many commands in return for a certain number of rewards."

The whole law is fulfilled in one word. Paul does not mean the whole law with reference to both God and man, simply the law with reference to our duty to our fellowman. This agrees with the statement of Jesus that the one commandment to love God with our whole being and to love our neighbor as ourself is to do all the law and prophets demand of us. (Matt. 22: 34-40.) The fact that the law is contained in one word does not mean that we are any less under a law. The law says we are to love our neighbor, and he who hates his neighbor violates that law. Where then is freedom? Freedom is to be found in having this law written in

our heart so that we will enjoy loving our neighbor and will find it the answer to our greatest desire.

But if ye bite and devour one another. This language describes the opposite attitude to loving one's neighbor as one loves himself. The words *bite and devour* are words used to describe the action of dogs when fighting. Such a course of action on the part of men professing to be like Christ is unthinkable, but not unknown. Brethren sometimes do just that through means of the printed page. It can be done through com-

mon gossip, carrying tales from one to another. Such conduct can lead only to one result, the destruction of each other. Loving one another as we love ourselves will correct this condition. Feeling that we are servants one of another and feeling obligated to render that service in the spirit of love will keep us from biting and devouring one another. Freedom in Christ does not give us the right to harm each other; when we bite and devour, we are not using our freedom, but license to do as we please regardless of God's will.

Lessons to Learn

1. Any act of worship which has to be authorized by an appeal to the old covenant obligates one to keep the whole law, and he who seeks to be justified by the keeping of the law is fallen away from grace. Those who justify their use of mechanical instruments of worship by an appeal to the old covenant should take notice of this.

2. Whosoever believeth is born of God. (1 John 5: 1.) Whosoever doeth righteousness is born of God. (1 John 2: 29.) Whosoever loveth

ii born of God. (1 John 4: 7.) Are there three births? No, Paul ties these three together by teaching that one is born of God when that one has a faith that works by love. (Gal. 5: 6.)

3. Many people resent being subject to authority, even that of God. But love for God will cause us to be happy in our subjection to him, and his love for us will cause him to demand nothing of us which is not for our good.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

What is your definition for freedom in religion?

By what is our freedom limited?

How may one have freedom to do anything he wishes to do in religion?

How does God create within us the desire to do his will?

Discuss several things in which our freedom consists.

What is the purpose of our freedom?

Why is standing fast in this liberty for our own good?

How do we glorify Christ by standing fast in this liberty?

How do we help others by standing fast in this liberty?

What is the yoke of bondage?

Discuss three things it does for one.

Works of the Law Sever from Christ

Why did Christ set us free?

From what did he free us?

What is meant by being entangled in the yoke of bondage?

What is the consequence of receiving circumcision?

How can this be harmonized with the fact that Paul had Timothy circumcised?

Why is the one who is circumcised as a means of justification obligated to keep the whole law?

What is meant by being severed from Christ?

Can you illustrate this point?

What two systems of justification are suggested in this lesson?

What is meant by failing away from grace?

What proof can you give for the possibility of failing away from grace?

Sundry Matters of Interest

Who can wait by faith for the hope of righteousness?

What part does the Holy Spirit have in our waiting for the hope of justification?

What proof do we have in this text that there is no profit in being a son of Abraham after the flesh?

What kind of works must faith do to avail anything and in what spirit?

What proof do we have in this text that Paul was warning Christians lest they fall?

Can you prove that a faith that works by love is one that obeys the truth?

Can you explain Paul's use of the word *leaven* in this lesson?

What confidence does Paul express toward the Galatians?

What proof does Paul give that he was not preaching circumcision?

Freedom Versus License

For what purpose does God call people?

What proof do we have that freedom does not permit one to disobey the Lord?

What effect does ignorance have on one's relationship to God?

How can one have freedom in Christ and still be a slave to others?

In what word is the whole law fulfilled?

What did Jesus say about this?

What is meant by biting and devouring?

How can this be done?

What is the consequence of such activity?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson XIII—September 25, 1955

SOWING AND REAPING

Lesson Text

Gal. 6: 6-16

6 But let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

8 For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life.

9 And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

10 So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith.

11 See with how large letters I write unto you with mine own hand.

12 As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they compel you to be circumcised; only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.

13 For not even they who receive circumcision do themselves keep the law; but they desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

14 But far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Je-sus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

15 For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

16 And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace *be* upon them, and mercy, and upon the Is'-ra-el of God.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”* (Gal. 6: 7.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gal. 6: 1-5.

Daily Bible Readings

- September 19. M.....The Harvest of Sin (Gal. 6: 6-10)
- September 20. T.....Must Confess Sins (1 John 1: 5-10)
- September 21. W.....An Advocate for Sinners (1 John 2: 1-5)
- September 22. T.....Cleansing from Sin (Isa. 1: 16-20)
- September 23. F.....Bidden to Sin No More (John 8: 3-11)
- September 24. S.....A City Without Sin (Rev. 21: 1-9)
- September 25. S.....Fruit Unto Sanctification (Rom. 6: 16-23)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACES.—Corinth and Galatia.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints in Galatia.

Golden Text Explained

1. Be **not** deceived, (a) By self. We are usually on our guard against deception by others, but not so with reference to self. Self-deception is rather common. Many of us believe what we wish to be true. Many people believe they are in ill health because they get a certain satisfaction out of the attention and sympathy they get from others. And we can be self-deceived in religion as well as in our physical condition. We can deceive ourselves to think we are acceptable to God because our sins are no worse than the sins of others. Or we can set up a standard by which we think God ought to judge the world, and since we live up to

that standard we think we are acceptable to him. Some have determined what they think the character of God should be, and since they meet the requirements of such a God they feel perfectly secure, (b) By false teachers. There is much teaching in the New Testament warning us against being deceived by false teachers. (Col. 2: 8, 16; 2 Cor. 11: 13-15; Matt. 7: 15; Tit. 1: 10, 11.) There are various doctrines which tend to deceive people and lull them into a feeling of security while still in a lost condition. (1) One-church-as-good-as-another and the-church-not-your-saviour are doctrines which usually go together and lull people

into a feeling of security while they are doing nothing to make their calling and election sure. They have heard false teachers stress these ideas so many times, and they appeal to their desire to get by with as little effort as possible, so they accept them as true and trust that God will be pleased in spite of the fact that the Bible teaches no such doctrine. (2) The idea that a child cannot so live as to be lost in hell is another doctrine which appeals to people who do not wish to be bothered by living up to the requirements of the Lord. It is a comforting doctrine; people wish to believe it, so they accept it and are deceived as to their true condition before God. (3) Many people do not wish to believe in the existence of hell, and there are plenty of men who preach the doctrine. These people set up their idea of the character of God and conclude that punishment of any of his creatures in hell would be contrary to the nature of God. Some agree that there is a place of punishment, but that after one has suffered sufficiently to pay for his sin and folly he will be released from the place of suffering to go on to eternal happiness. Being thus deceived, they are willing to suffer for a while in order to get to enjoy sinful pleasures while here. (4) Others stress the love and mercy of God to such an extent that they think he is too good to punish people at all. We have no inclination to minimize the love and mercy of God, but we must not forget the holiness and justice, the severity, of God. (Rom. 11: 22.) (5) Then there are those who are deceived by thinking form can be substituted for reality, so they are going through certain forms of godliness, but denying the power thereof.

2. **God is not mocked.** The word *mock* is from a Greek word which means to turn up the nose in scorn; to sneer; to insult. Paul tells us we cannot insult the authority of God with impunity; we cannot indulge in selfish pleasures in spite of his teaching to the contrary and get by without suffering the penalty, (a) The attributes of God assure us of the truth of this proposition. God is so holy that he cannot countenance sin. (Hab. 1: 13.) He is omnipresent, so he can know when we sin. (Psalm 139: 7-13; Jer. 23: 23, 24.) He will **not** suffer the guilty to go unpunished. (Ex. 34: 6, 7.) He is

omnipotent, so is able to punish all who refuse to obey him. (Gen. 17: 1; Ex. 6: 3.) It is impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6: 18); he has said he will punish the disobedient and ignorant (2 Thess. 1: 8-10), so we must conclude that he cannot be mocked, deceived, or bribed into allowing us to dishonor his law or disrespect his authority, (b) Examples abound in the Bible to prove that God cannot be mocked. Saul, the first king of Israel, attempted to do as he pleased without paying attention to God's directions. (1 Sam. 15.) He was rejected from being king, deserted by the Lord and his prophet, defeated, and died a suicide. Nadab and Abihu, priests of God, disrespected the authority of God to use fire which God had not commanded, and they were immediately devoured by fire from heaven. (Lev. 10: 1ff.) Ananias and Sapphira lied to God and fell dead immediately. (Acts 5: 1ff.) They seemed to think they could hide their sin from God, so were deceived in thinking God could be mocked with impunity, (c) If these examples are not enough to prove that God cannot be mocked, we should be impressed with the positive statement of God's word, which never deals in false statements or with trivial matters.

3. **We reap as we sow.** (a) Paul takes this law from nature. In the beginning God decreed that every seed should produce after its kind. (Gen. 1: 11, 12.) We have seen this rule working in the natural realm without the slightest variation ever since the beginning. If it works without variation in the natural realm over which God presides, we must conclude that it will work without variation in the spiritual realm presided over by the same God. (b) Special application. Our text was given to warn brethren with reference to the manner in which they use their material wealth. If they use it to satisfy the lusts of the flesh, they will reap corruption, eternal death. But if they use their wealth for spiritual purposes, for the accomplishment of spiritual good, they shall reap eternal life. This is not an unusual use of the figure, for Paul taught, "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." (2 Cor. 9: 6.) In this place no one doubts that the

words sow and reap refer to giving of money. And such is their primary meaning in our text, (c) General application. While the words have their primary application and meaning in our text, we must not lose sight of the general principle taught by them. It is true that the principle is wider than Paul's use of it in our text. Achan (Josh. 6 and 7.) stole from God, tried to hide it, but died because he could not mock God.

He reaped as he sowed. David sinned grievously and tried to hide it, but he learned that God is not mocked, and during the balance of his life he learned that men reap as they show. Sorrow, suffering, and disgrace attended him just as God said it would as a result of his sin. Let us be warned by these examples to avoid the sorrow and suffering which inevitably accompany sowing to the flesh.

Exposition of the Text

I. Use of Material Wealth Important

(Gal. 6: 6-8)

Let him that is taught in the word communicate. This is addressed to people who have been taught in the word, those who have received the word and propose to be guided by it. The word communicate means sharing, joint participation, fellowship. Paul used the same word when he said the church at Philippi was the only one that had fellowship with him in the matter of living and receiving. (Phil. 4: 14, 15.) So Paul is teaching us that we who are taught in the word are to share with those who teach, have fellowship with the teacher so that he may give his time to teaching. He said, if the ox that trends out the corn is not to be muzzled, so he can partake of the corn with his master, neither is the teacher of the word to be denied the privilege of partaking, or reaping your carnal things. (1 Cor. 9: 9-11.) And as those who ministered about sacred things ate of the offerings made in the temple, so those who preach the gospel are to live of the gospel. (1 Cor. 9: 13, 14.) In connection with support of gospel preaching and teaching, some matters should be discussed, (a) While admitting that preachers should be supported, some affirm that they should not have a stipulated amount of salary. The Bible teaches that preachers are to be supported, but does not teach how much they are to get or whether they may or may not have an agreement with the church as to the amount they are to receive, (b) Some admit that preachers are to be paid, but that the church is to determine the amount, the preacher not having a word to say about that. This is especially true with reference to the preacher who holds a protracted meeting of ten days or two weeks. If the man who preaches regularly for a church has

a voice in the amount he is paid, why does not the man who is there for two weeks have a voice in the amount he is to receive? (c) Others, who hold the theory of "evangelistic authority," are now advocating that preachers should have no set salary, but are to draw from the church according only to the necessities of life. This is something like the agreement the Homan Catholic priest has and is neither scriptural nor wise, (d) On the other side of the matter it is possible that in these days when preachers are scarce churches may bid for the service of men of outstanding ability by offering salaries unreasonably high. It will be a sad day for the church when men of such ability will stoop to accept such a salary, or when churches stoop to offer such to take a man away from another church where he is doing good.

He that soweth unto his own flesh. From Paul's letter to the Corinthians we have learned that sowing is used to mean giving of money, or using money. The man who sows to his flesh is the one who uses his wealth to satisfy the desires of the flesh. And satisfying the desires of the flesh must not be limited to satisfying the passions in acts of indecency or immorality. One may use his money to the satisfaction of the desires of his flesh without ever a thought of immorality, (a) Many use their wealth to satisfy the desires of the flesh by taking extended vacations and tours across country, or into foreign countries, at great expense. To spend more money in this way than we spend in saving souls is surely to violate the teaching of this passage. (b) We may use our wealth to live on a higher plane socially, to wear fine clothes and live in mansions, and have none left to save souls and violate the teaching of this passage, (c)

People may spend their money for smoking, entertainment, hobbies, etc., spending more money for such things than they are willing to give to save souls and violate the teaching of this text.

Shall of the flesh reap corruption. Corruption is used here in opposition to eternal life. Corruption is a state to which all flesh must inevitably come. So Paul uses this word to describe the state to which all who serve the flesh must come. To use one's wealth to serve the lusts of the flesh will result in bringing that one to the same end to which the flesh he serves is sure to come. All authorities on the meaning of words known to this writer agree with this idea of the meaning of this word. It is a fearful conclusion, but the Holy Spirit is responsible for it, and we should take warning. This is another text which disproves the theory of the impossibility of apostasy. If children of God can waste their money on the lusts of the flesh, they can reap corruption, be lost in hell.

He that soweth unto the Spirit. To sow to the Spirit is to use one's wealth for the accomplishment of God's purposes. Some have the idea that, if they give a tenth of their income, they can spend the balance they please. Such is not true. We are obligated to spend the other nine-tenths so as to sow to the Spirit in such way as will honor God. A reasonable amount of recreation and diversion is needful for the health and efficient work of the body, but beyond that which is needful we spend our money while souls die eternally who might live if we would use it to sow to the Spirit.

Of the Spirit reap eternal life. This certainly proves that proper use of wealth has something to do with determining where we will spend eternity. Let us be sure we so use the wealth God has given us that when it fails we shall be received into the eternal tabernacles. (Luke 16: 9.) It will be well for the reader to study the lesson Jesus gave on proper use of our wealth in Luke 16: 1-13. Note also in verse 14, of that same chapter, that the lovers of money scoffed at his teaching that the use of money has anything to do in determining our destiny; and then note that he gave the lesson on the rich man and Lazarus in answer to their scoffing that he might impress them

with the truth that our use of our wealth does have something to do with deciding our destiny.

II. Exhortation to Perseverance (Gal. 6: 9, 10)

Let us not be weary in well-doing. This exhortation is not to be limited to the work of using our wealth to sow to the Spirit, though that is certainly included. There are many reasons which contribute to our becoming weary in well-doing. (a) Self-denial while beholding others about us enjoying the pleasures of the world becomes rather hard for some to bear over a long period of time. Sense of duty or fear of hell may cause us to do good for a while, but nothing but sheer joy of doing good and being like our Lord will enable us to continue faithfully all our lives, (b) Criticism from others may cause us to get tired of doing good. Critics can find something wrong with the way you do good, the amount of good you do, and the spirit in which you do it. And if we think their criticism is unjust, we are likely to become discouraged and quit, (c) Lack of appreciation on the part of those we serve may cause us to quit. Not all who are in need have learned the lesson of appreciation, and the more we do for them the more they expect of us and criticize us for not doing more, (d) Some get discouraged because they think they are bearing more than their share of the load. Other members of the church spend their money for pleasure while we deny ourselves such pleasures to carry on a program of good; we envy them their pleasures and luxuries, not knowing that our treasures in heaven are worth more than all the fine clothes and houses they have. (e) Some carry the load a long time and then get the idea they have done their share and it is time for them to quit and let some younger people carry on for a while. It is true that young people should be added to the working forces and taught to bear their part of the load, but it is not true that any of us have done enough that we can quit and let others do it all.

In due season we shall reap. The due season is the proper time, that which is proper in God's sight. We may not get rewards which we can see and handle, and they may not come at the time we want them. But it is our part to labor faithfully

and leave the matter of rewards to God. "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the love which ye showed toward his name, in that ye ministered unto the saints, and still do minister." (Heb. 6: 10.) "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord." (1 Cor. 15: 58.)

If we faint not. The word *faint* is sometimes used of physical exhaustion, but here it means to give up and quit making any further efforts to do good. The word *reap* in verse 8 means to gain eternal life. In this verse we are told that we shall reap, that is, gain eternal life, if we faint not. Gaining eternal life depends on being faithful to the end. "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." (Matt. 10: 22.) The one who is faithful unto death shall receive the crown of life. (Rev. 2: 10.) If the child of God cannot possibly faint, Paul wasted time and effort trying to keep these children of God from doing something impossible for them to do. If a child of God can faint, give up and quit trying to do good, he can be lost.

As we have opportunity. Some one has said that ability plus opportunity equals responsibility. "To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." (James 4: 17.) To know to do good includes having the opportunity. However, our greatest fault lies not in having no opportunities, but in recognizing the opportunities and in summoning the zeal and courage to take advantage of them. Success in many fields of activity depends on our making an opportunity where there seems to be none. The difference between success and failure many times is the ability in one to make an opportunity where the other persons failed to see the chance to do so.

Work that which is good toward all men. Preaching the gospel is the primary function of the church, but doing good will often open a door for the preaching of the gospel that would never be opened in any other way. Taking care of homeless children is a good work. Some are so shortsighted that they are even arguing that we have no obligation to care for homeless children. If the church ever reaches that state where it can see hungry children starve and

homeless children reared in godless surroundings without doing what it can to better their condition, it will cease to be a church of the Lord.

Especially toward them that are of the household of the faith. Our first duty is to care for those in the family of God. The church in Jerusalem set a good example in this by caring for the widows in its membership. (Acts 6.) Some tie this in with verse 6 and say it makes it our special duty to care for aged preachers, but if that is true, the verse would seem to obligate us to care for preachers who are not of the household of faith. The verse, no doubt, teaches us to care for aged teachers, but it need not be viewed as being tied in with the teaching in verse 6.

III. Final Warning Concerning False Teachers (Gal. 6: 11-16)

How large letters I write unto you. Paul usually used help in writing his letters, simply dictating them to a writer. Some think he departed from this custom and wrote all this letter as a manifestation of his love for them and his personal interest in them. Others think Paul dictated the letter to this point and then personally took over the writing and called attention to the difference in size of the letters as proof. Perhaps the latter idea is the true one.

Desire to make a fair show in the flesh. Paul says those in Galatia who are bringing pressure upon the Christians to accept circumcision are doing it to make a show. They did not have the spiritual welfare of the people at heart, but were more interested in showing their loyalty to the rites and ceremonies of the law of Moses.

That they may not be persecuted. This is given as an added reason why they were insisting on the Galatians accepting circumcision. By showing zeal for the law they would expect persecution. From this and the statement to follow we get the idea Paul is referring to people who were not Jews by birth, but who had been circumcised and wished to give the impression that they were zealous for the law.

Even they who receive circumcision. Paul says they who receive circumcision do not keep the law. He speaks of these as if they had lately received circumcision, but did not feel obligated to keep the whole

law, specially those parts which obligated them to be kind and to do good to their fellow man. They put all their emphasis on the outward forms of the law and left the weightier matters undone. (Matt. 23: 23.) When they had proselyted one to their faith, they felt they had something of which to glory, so Paul said they were not interested in doing good to people, but in doing something which would give them grounds for glorying in the flesh.

Far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord. Others could glory in the works of the law if they wished, but Paul gloried only in the cross of Jesus Christ. The cross was an emblem of shame, and those who died in that manner were disgraced. And those who allied themselves with one crucified were subjected to the same shame as the one crucified. So it cost people something in worldly honor and position to accept Jesus as their Lord. Beyond mere acceptance of Christ Paul openly gloried in his relationship as a servant of the despised crucified peasant of Galilee.

The world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world. Crucifixion was a means of showing the utmost contempt for a person, as lynching is today. To say the world has been crucified unto us is to say it has been made a contemptible thing, something to loathe and abhor. One who loves the world and its pleasures cannot say truthfully that it has been crucified unto him. When one was crucified, though he lived for a time after being nailed to the cross, he was rendered inactive and inoperative. So, when the

world has been crucified unto us, it is no longer a force in our life, it no longer controls our thoughts or dictates our activities. As long as one follows the course of this world (Eph. 2: 1-3), or is conformed to this world (Rom. 12: 2), that one cannot say the world has been crucified unto him. Paul was crucified unto the world; he had become an object of contempt to the world because he had allied himself with Christ. He was made a spectacle to the world, a fool for Christ's sake, the filth of the world and the scourging of all things. (1 Cor. 4: 9-13.) When Christians are willing to suffer that much for the Lord that they may carry on the work of the Lord, the church will march in triumph through every nation holding forth the word of life and bringing peace and hope where only strife and despair were known before.

But a new creature. The formalities of the law are worthless as a means of justification and are not to be made the grounds of receiving people into fellowship. Being a new creature is the important thing. One can be a new creature only if he is in Christ. (2 Cor. 5: 17.) We are baptized into Christ only when we have sincerely believed in him and truly repented of our sins and confessed him before men. (Gal. 3: 27; Rom. 10: 9, 10; Acts 2: 38.) Since one cannot be a new creature without such obedience, it follows that this obedience is as important as being a new creature. Nor is this simply trading one form (circumcision) for another form (baptism), for we attach no importance to baptism which the Lord does not attach.

Lessons to Learn

1. Not every one can teach others how to become Christians, but every person can communicate unto him that teacheth according to the ability God has given him. If all who have been taught would give according to their ability, we would have enough money to send the gospel to the whole world.

2. Giving account of wasted opportunities will be rather embarrassing to many of us in the judgment. How many times have you intended

to do good, but let business or pleasure hinder you until the opportunity was gone? If some soul spends eternity in hell because I did not use an opportunity to teach him the truth, how can I expect the Lord to be merciful to me?

3. Our daily prayer should be that God will create within us a pure heart that can hold the world and its pleasures in holy contempt and one that can sincerely love all that is good and pure.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory. Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

What do you know about self-deception? Can you give some New Testament teaching about deception by false teachers?

Name and discuss five false doctrines by which people are deceived.

What is the meaning of the word mock in our text?

Name and discuss some reasons why God cannot be mocked.

Give some examples of people who tried to mock God and failed.

Upon what natural law did Paul build the lesson of our text?

What is the primary lesson of our text?

What is the general lesson of the text?

Name and discuss some men who learned this lesson to their sorrow.

Use of Material Wealth Important

What is the meaning of the word communicate in our lesson?

What duty do we have toward the teachers of the word?

What Old Testament illustrations did Paul use to teach this lesson?

Name and discuss at least four ideas prevalent with reference to paying preachers.

What is the meaning of the word sow in our lesson?

Name and discuss several ways in which we may sow to the flesh.

What is meant by reaping corruption?

What does this do for the doctrine of the impossibility of apostasy?

How do we sow to the Spirit?

What is the reward for so doing?

What did Jesus teach about our use of

wealth determining where we spend eternity?

Exhortation to Perseverance

Name and discuss five reasons why people may become weary in well-doing.

What does "in due season" mean?

What assurance do we have that we will reap rewards for well-doing?

What is the meaning of the words faint and reap in this text?

Is it possible to faint?

If so, what is the consequence?

What is the relationship between opportunity and responsibility?

To whom is our first responsibility?

What is the measure of our responsibility to all men?

What church set a good example of taking care of its own?

Final Warning Concerning False Teachers

What part did Paul have in actual writing of the Galatian letter?

Why did people try to get the Galatians to be circumcised?

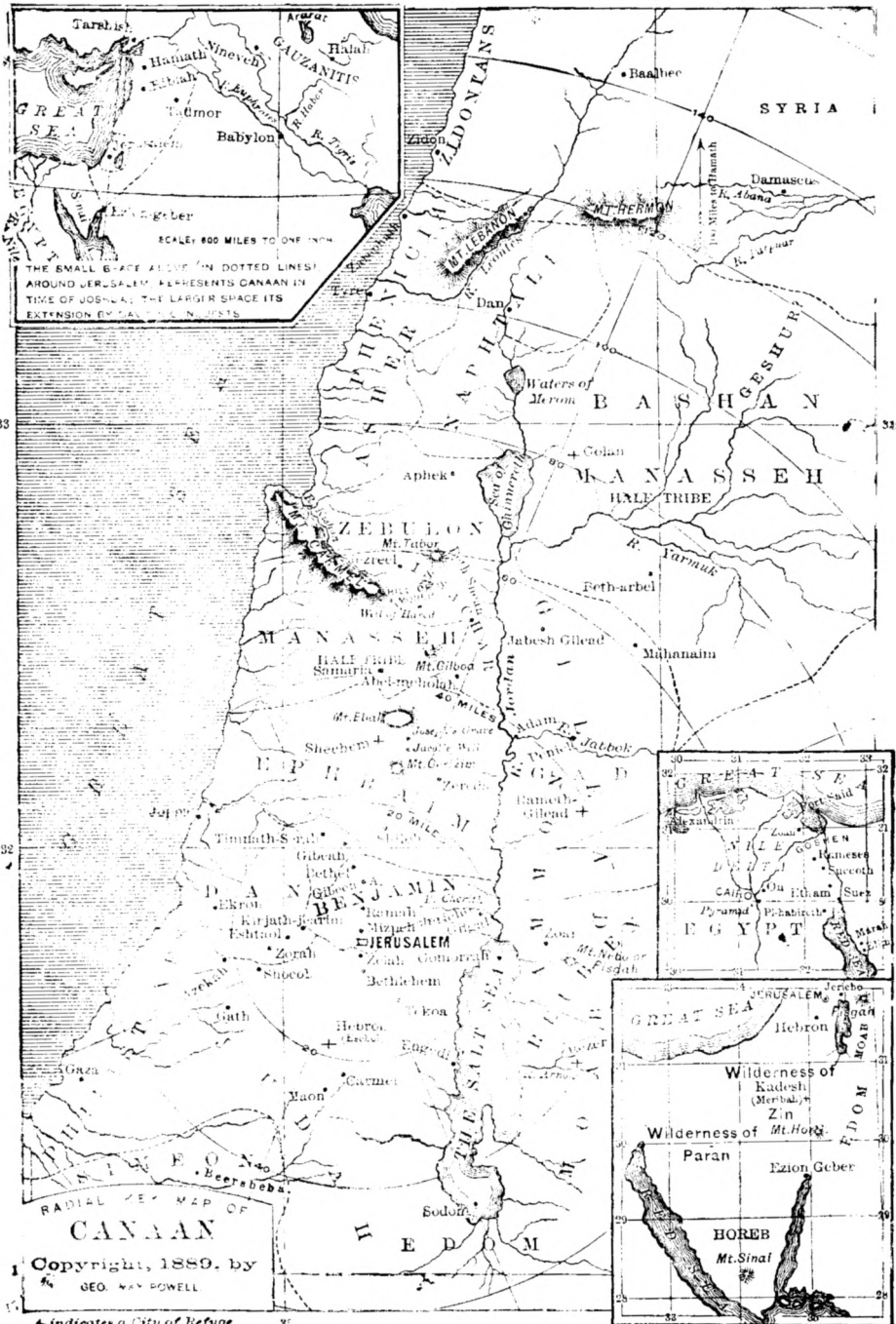
What charge did Paul make against them?

Contrast the object of their glorying with that of Paul.

Discuss the meaning of the world being crucified to us and our being crucified to the world.

What gives importance to the obedience we render to get into Christ?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?



THE SMALL SPACE AROUND DOTTED LINES AROUND JERUSALEM REPRESENTS CANAAN IN TIME OF JOSEPH; THE LARGER SPACE ITS EXTENSION BY DAVID AND BENJAMIN.

RADIAL MAP OF CANAAN

Copyright, 1889, by GEO. W. POWELL

* indicates a City of Refuge

FOURTH QUARTER

THE PERIOD OF THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

AIM.—*To learn outstanding historical facts of the period of the divided kingdom, and from them draw out lessons applicable to our time.*

Lesson I—October 2, 1955

DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM

Lesson Text

1 Kings 12: 12-20

12 So Jer-o-bo'-am and all the people came to Re-ho-bo'-am the third day. as the king bade, saying, Come to me again the third day.

13 And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the counsel of the old men which they had given him,

14 And spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying. My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

15 So the king hearkened not unto the people; for it was a thing brought about of Je-ho'-vah, that he might establish his word, which Je-ho'-vah spake by A-hi'-jah the Shi'-lo-nite to Jer'-o-bo'-am the son of Ne'-bat.

16 And when all Is'-ra-el saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? nei-

their have wo inheritance in the son of Jes'-se: to your tents, O Is'-ra-el: now see to thine own house, David. So Is'-ra-el departed unto their tents.

17 But as for the children of Is'-ra-el that dwelt in the cities of Ju'-dah, Re-ho-bo'-am reigned over them.

18 Then king Re-ho-bo'-am sent A-do'-ram, who was over the men subject to taskwork; and all Is'-ra-el stoned him to death with stones. And king Re-ho-bo'-am made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Je-ru'-sa-lem.

19 So Is'-ra-el rebelled against the house of David unto this day.

20 And it came to pass, when all Is'-ra-el heard that Jer-o-bo'-am was returned, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Is'-ra-el: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Ju'-dah only.

Golden Text.—*"If a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand." (Mark 3: 24.)*

Devotional Reading.—1 Kings 12: 1-5.

Daily Bible Readings

- September 26. M. Division of the Kingdom Predicted (1 Kings 11: 1-13)
- September 27. T..... Sins of Apostasy (1 Chron. 13: 5-11)
- September 28. W..... Politics in Religion (1 Kings 12: 25-33)
- September 29. T. End of an Evil House (1 Kings 15: 25-30)
- September 30. F..... Civil War (1 Kings 16: 8-16)
- October 1. S..... Rehoboam Unfaithful (2 Chron. 12: 1-14)
- October 2. S..... Defeat of Israel by Judah (2 Chron. 13: 1-22)

Time.—975 B. C.

Place.—Shechem.

Persons.—Jeroboam, Rehoboam, and all Israel.

Golden Text Explained

1. Explanation and general application of the text. Jesus had only recently appointed twelve of his disciples to be his apostles and had given them authority to cast out demons. There was great excitement among the people, and such multitudes gathered and pressed on

Jesus for his time that he could not so much as eat bread. When his friends heard about it, they concluded that he was "beside himself." There were certain scribes from Jerusalem who beheld his work, but who were unwilling to give him proper credit. They said that he was cast-

ing out demons by Beezelbub, the prince of demons. We might comment here that the success of Jesus in casting out demons was so obvious that even these scribes could not deny it. The best they could do was to attribute it to unholy sources. Jesus answered by saying that, if he was casting out demons by the power of Beezelbub, Satan would be working against himself and for the overthrow of his own kingdom. We may accuse the devil of everything that is bad, but no one ever accused him of being so lacking in common sense that he would give someone the power to destroy himself. This principle may be applied with profit to several of the relationships of life, (a) Our nation recognizes the truth of this fact in its dealings with those of communistic philosophy of life. This philosophy of life is so contrary to our American way of life that the nation cannot stand if the communists are allowed to teach their theories. This principle is also recognized by our government in that they try to maintain a foreign policy which is acceptable to both major political parties, (b) This principle applies to the home. When there is division and contention in the home, it is headed for ruin. Fathers and mothers must be in agreement on such things as spending the family income, disciplining the children, and how the children should spend their time in recreation, where they shall attend church, and other things in order for the home to be a success, (c) A church divided against itself cannot stand. David realized that it was both good and pleasant for brethren to dwell together in unity. (Psalms 133: 1.) Paul taught the church at Corinth to forget the various preachers under whom they had obeyed the gospel, and that they "all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (1 Cor. 1: 10.) Factions and divisions are classed as works of the flesh, which will keep people from entering into the kingdom of God. (Gal. 5: 21.)

2. The folly of division. Division is foolish whether it comes in a family or in a church or a nation Paul teaches us the folly of division in the church by comparing the church with the human body. (1 Cor. 12.) It would be utter folly for

one member of the body to refuse to function because some other member of the body has a more prominent position. If the hand were to refuse to carry food to the mouth because the hand never enjoys the pleasant taste of food, it would soon realize that its welfare depended, not on tasting, but on performing its peculiar duties. The folly of division is seen (a) in that, when one member is working against another member of the same body, that member is really working against itself. This principle applies in the home, the church, or the nation. No individual can work against the body of which he is a member without injuring himself. (b) Division is folly because it gives advantage to our enemy. This is especially true in the church. Satan is always looking for an advantage to accomplish his purposes. Division offers about the best opportunity Satan has for destroying a church.

3. The sin of division, (a) Division in the church is sinful because God has commanded us to maintain unity. (1 Cor. 1: 10; 1 Cor. 12: 12ff.) (b) Division in the church is sinful because it makes impossible the answer to the prayer of Jesus. (John 17: 20-23.) Jesus prayed that there be no division among believers in order that the world may believe that God sent him. (c) Division in the church is wrong because it consumes time and energy, which should be spent in doing good and saving souls, (d) Division in the church is wrong because it arouses and cultivates evil dispositions in the hearts of brethren. Anger, wrath, malice, enmity, jealousy, and such like evil dispositions thrive when brethren are divided.

4. The cure for division, (a) Love for truth and right. If every individual in the church can truthfully say that he loves that which is true, and right, one of the most fruitful causes of division will be removed. When men are more interested in self-promotion than they are in truth and right, division is likely to come, (b) Love of the brethren. When brethren love one another and rejoice in each other's spiritual growth and progress, there will be little cause for jealousy and division which follow. (c) Love for the church. When brethren love the church so much that they are willing to suffer wrongs to protect the unity and the

good name of the church, there will be no division. When we love ourselves more than the church and are

determined to promote our own welfare at the expense of the church, division is likely to thrive.

Introduction

In First Kings, chapter 11, we are told that Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines, and that his wives turned away his heart from Jehovah. Some of these wives were foreign women who worshiped such gods as Milcom, Chemosh, and Molech. Solomon built temples for the worship of these foreign gods, and it is probable that he entered into the idolatrous worship of these gods. Because Solomon went after other gods, Jehovah said, "Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant." The tribe of Ephraim was a large and powerful tribe, and was always jealous of the position of the tribe of Judah. Jeroboam, of the tribe

of Ephraim, was an ambitious young man, who won promotions under Solomon, until he had charge "over all the labor of the house of Joseph." God sent the prophet Ahijah to Jeroboam to tell him that he was to have ten of the tribes of Israel, when the kingdom was divided. We are not told of how Solomon knew of the statement of this prophet, but we are told that, on account of this prophecy, Solomon sought to kill Jeroboam; but Jeroboam fled to Egypt until the death of Solomon. God told Solomon that he would not allow the kingdom to be divided during Solomon's lifetime. But it was not for the sake of Solomon that this was done. God said that it was "for my servant David's sake and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen.

Exposition of the Text

I. Rehoboam Answers the People

(1 Kings 12: 12-15)

So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam. In verse 1 we are told that this meeting was held in Shechem for the purpose of making Rehoboam king over all Israel. It was the custom in Israel for the people to confirm their choice of a king and to take part in a public service of anointing their king. We learned that Solomon was hurriedly anointed in order to keep Adonijah from taking over the throne, but that later he was anointed a second time when all the people could have a part in it. (1 Chron. 29: 22b.) So it seems that this meeting at Shechem was for the purpose of giving all Israel a chance to confirm the new king on his throne. However, the selection of Shechem as the place for this national meeting instead of Jerusalem was most significant. "Such a parliament of the ten northern tribes was now convened, presumably by the elders of each; not, however, at Jerusalem, as might have been expected, but in their own territory, at Shechem. Rehoboam must come to them, not they to him. This itself was ominous, but he lived as yet in a fool's paradise, blind and deaf as to what would have arrested the deepest attention of a sensible ruler. Meanwhile there was

no overt hint of disloyal intentions; they desired only some reforms which, as free men, they had a right to claim. Yet they based their demand for these on a ground unpalatable in the extreme to a king. Their obedience to him, they said, in effect, was conditional; it was free to them to serve him or not, as they chose; if he confirmed their old constitutional liberties, they would accept it; if not, they would withdraw from allegiance." (Geikie.)

Come to me again the third day.

This is what Rehoboam told the people of the ten tribes when they stated that their acceptance of him was conditional. In verse 4 we learn the condition which the people of these ten tribes imposed upon Rehoboam. They said, "Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee." There is considerable argument as to whether Jeroboam, and the leaders of the ten tribes, intended a rebellion at this time. Jeroboam had the word of the prophet that he was to be the ruler of the ten tribes, but he was not told when he would become king, except that it was stated that he should be made king while the son of Solomon reigned. It is very probable that

Jeroboam and his associates knew that Rehoboam would not act favorably on their proposition, and that they had all things in readiness for a rebellion.

The king answered the people roughly. When the king heard their request, that his service be made lighter, he asked for three days in which to consider the matter. During these three days, he asked first the old men who were associated with his father in the government what he should do. They advised him to accede to the wishes of the people. He then turned to the young men of his own age and asked them for advice. They counseled him to pay no attention to the people and, if any change was to be made at all, to become harsher and harder in his government of the people.

Spake to them after the counsel of the young men. People seem to learn in no school except that of experience. Rehoboam would not take the counsel of the old men. Perhaps he thought they were soft and did not know how to rule people. He told the people that he would add to the already heavy yoke which his father had imposed upon them. He also said that where his father had chastised them for their disobedience, he would increase that chastisement to the point where it could no longer be termed chastisement, but punishment.

It was a thing brought about of Jehovah. We are not to think that Jehovah caused Rehoboam to act as he did. A good and holy God could not be the cause of such folly and wickedness as Rehoboam manifested on this occasion. But the rebellion of the ten tribes against this folly and wickedness may be viewed as a thing from Jehovah. Shortly after this Rehoboam assembled quite an army to subdue the newly-formed kingdom. But Jehovah would not allow it, and he sent this army home, saying, "Return every man to his house; for this thing is of me." (1 Kings 12: 24.) This was a natural consequence of the sins of Solomon, and regardless of what may have been Jehovah's purposes, human responsibilities remain the same.

II. The People Reject Rehoboam (X Kings 12: 16-19)

What portion have we in David? This was the reply of the people when they heard the answer which Rehoboam gave to their proposition.

It is equal to asserting that these ten tribes had no portion or rights in the reign of the sons of David. This was no reflection upon David personally, but upon the descendants of David.

To your tents, O Israel. David heard this same cry raised soon after the death of Absalom. The ten tribes were jealous of Judah's association with David. And only firm, bold measures on the part of David and his army prevented a division at that time. (2 Sam. 19: 40 to 20: 1ff.) From this experience of David we see that the jealousy between the ten tribes on one side and Judah on the other was not unusual. Even in David's day the word Israel was often used to refer to the ten tribes as opposed to Judah with two tribes.

But as for the children of Israel that dwelt in the cities of Judah. This verse tells us that the division was not strictly along tribal lines. Those people who were members of the ten tribes but lived in cities of Judah continued to submit to the reign of Rehoboam. So the division was more according to geographical lines than according to tribal lines.

Rehoboam sent Adoram, While Rehoboam remained in Shechem, he made an attempt to settle the trouble and prevent the division of his kingdom. He sent Adoram to see if reconciliation could be affected. This man is elsewhere called Adoniram. He was appointed as superintendent of the men subject to task work. (1 Kings 4: 6; 5: 14.) It is stated by Josephus that Adoram was sent to appease and conciliate the rebels, but others think it unlikely that a headstrong prince would stoop to such humbling tactics this early in the game. They think that Adoram was sent to collect the tribute to remind the people of their subjection to Rehoboam. "It seems quite as likely that he was sent to coerce them, or to collect the taxes, as a summary way of showing that the king meant to enforce his rights and was not moved by their words. For it is hardly probable that such a proud and headstrong prince as Rehoboam would stoop, especially after the confident threats which he had just uttered, to parley with rebels. Such a man, guided by such counselors, and inflated with a sense of his own power and importance, would naturally think of force rather than of conciliation or concession. He would be

for trying his whips of scorpions." (Pulpit Commentary.)

All Israel stoned him to death. The people of Israel were in an ugly rebellious mood. They were determined to go through with the division and to be from under the intolerable conditions imposed upon them by Solomon. If Adoram was sent to conciliate the ten tribes, the selection was a poor one, since he had been their taskmaster. If he was sent to collect tribute in the place of personal service, Rehoboam's judgment as to the time to make this collection was very poor. Inflamed by his arrogance and oppressive measures, they took vengeance on the man who represented the king and stoned him to death.

So Israel rebelled against the house of David. Hearing of the death of Adoram, Rehoboam knew that it was time for him to leave Shechem. So it is said that he speedily took to his chariot and fled to Jerusalem. Though divided from Judah, and not subject to the rule of the sons of David, Israel was at all times regarded as a part of the people of God, and as being under his care and subject to his rule

III. Jeroboam Made King: of Israel (1 Kings 12: 20)

All Israel heard that Jeroboam was returned. This verse tells us that, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned from Egypt, they called him to the congregation and made him king. But, in verse 3 we are told that Jeroboam was the spokesman for Israel in demanding that Rehoboam lighten the oppression which his father had instigated. It is probable that the term, "all Israel," in the first part of the chapter, refers to the leaders or representatives of the people. It is hardly possible that all the people of Israel attended the meeting at Shechem. And it would be perfectly correct to call the representative gathering there an assembly of all Israel. Then when the representatives who met Rehoboam at Shechem went back home, they told their people of the presence of Jeroboam and the happenings at Shechem, and of Jeroboam's part in bringing these things to pass, an enthusiastic demand for Jeroboam as their first king was soon under way.

And made him king over all Israel.

A question has been raised as to whether the ten tribes did right or

wrong on this occasion. There are good Bible scholars on both sides of the argument, and, of course, we will not be able to settle the argument in this lesson. But we may be able to make a few worthwhile suggestions with reference to it. (a) Division among the people of God is always wrong. To the extent that Solomon sinned, and Rehoboam acted unwisely, we can say that the people of Judah were responsible for the division. And to the extent that Israel was always jealous of Judah's position, and Jeroboam had unholy ambitions to be a ruler, we can say that Israel was responsible for the division. (b) There was some good on both sides. The people of Israel contended that they were being enslaved and that they did not have enough representation in the affairs of government. These things were certainly true, and they were entitled to the correction of these matters. Judah contended that it was the will of God that the king be selected from the tribe of Judah; that the kingdom had been established in the house of David, and no one had a right to take it out of that house. While they were right in this contention, they did not have the right to abuse their privileges and enslave their brethren, (c) There was some evil on both sides. We have implied there was evil on the side of Israel because of the jealousy which existed in the tribe of Ephraim and the unholy ambition in the heart of Jeroboam. And we have suggested the evil on the part of Judah in that their king was willing to enslave other people and to give them no voice whatever in the affairs of government. There must be some evil on both sides in order to have a first-class division and to make it permanent. There may be some exceptions to this rule, but even when churches divide, there is usually two sides to the question, and some evil and some good on both sides, (d) the evils were not corrected by division. The people of Israel did not get rid of high taxes and oppression by separating from Judah and choosing a king of their own. Later events in the history of the nation go to prove that these evils continued to exist, (e) The reforms which Israel demanded were not attained. The idolatry of the people was not cured but rather increased under Jeroboam's rule. Representation of the people in the affairs of government,

which these tribes sought, was not attained by separation and the forming of a new government.

But the tribe of Judah only. Some have looked up this as a false statement. And if we take it as the last word on the subject, it would not be according to truth. In the very next verse we are told that Rehoboam came to Jerusalem and assembled the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin. Benjamin was the smallest of all the tribes of Israel. (1 Sam. 9: 21.) The tribes of Judah

and Benjamin were so closely associated and their interests so inter-related that they were often spoken of as one tribe. Rehoboam fortified several cities of Benjamin and took members of his family to live in those towns. (2 Chron. 11: 10-12.) Rehoboam also used Benjamites in high positions in his army. (2 Chron. 17: 17.) But perhaps the thing which strengthened the alliance between the two tribes most was the fact that the temple was on ground common to both tribes. (Josh. 18: 28.)

Relation to Our Aim

1. Places to be remembered. Shechem, in the time of our lesson, was a town thirty-five miles north of Jerusalem and situated in a valley between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebel. Brother McGarvey says that the town was 1,870 feet above sea level, and that the streams on the east side of town flowed into the Jordan and those on the west side flowed into the Mediterranean Sea. And that there are in all some seventy-five never-failing springs within the town and its immediate vicinity. It is a very ancient town, being a fortified city in the days of Jacob. (Gen. 34: 20, 25.) It is mentioned in the New Testament under the name Sychar, where Jesus talked with the Samaritan woman. (John 4: 5.)

2. Persons to be remembered, (a) Rehoboam. As we have already learned, Rehoboam was the son of Solomon. His mother was Naamah, a princess of the Ammonites. (1 Kings 12: 21.) This blood of the Ammonites in his veins may have contributed to his lack of interest in the welfare of his Jewish brothers. Rehoboam was not blessed with the wisdom of his father, nor did he have as much consideration for the welfare of his people, (b) Jeroboam. Jeroboam was an Ephraimite, whose father died when he was yet young, and whose mother was a woman of loose character, according to tradition. He was promoted by Solomon to position of trust and influence. But his ambition caused him to be disloyal in these positions of trust, and he would have been executed had he not escaped to Egypt. While in Egypt he married a princess but upon

hearing of the death of Solomon, he returned to Israel and took a lead in bringing about a rebellion of the ten tribes.

3. Facts to be remembered, (a) One of the outstanding facts in this lesson is the poor judgment of Rehoboam. He seems to have inherited none of the unusual wisdom of his father. He allowed arrogance and pride to rob him of any consideration of his subjects, (b) Israel took what seemed to them to be the only way out of a difficult situation, and the only way to get what they deserved. They made what seemed to them reasonable demands of a king, and promised, on condition their demands were accepted, to serve him the balance of their days.

4. Lessons to be remembered, (a) The consequences of our sins live on to plague not only us, but the generations that follow us. Solomon's sin, in marrying too many women, and becoming involved in their idolatry, not only brought about his downfall, but the division of the kingdom, (b) The young and inexperienced in life should listen to the counsel of those who are older and more experienced. Rehoboam's failure to listen to the counsel of experienced men cost him a greater portion of his kingdom, (c) People will not always bear with selfish and inconsiderate rulers. The ten tribes allowed oppression to continue as long as Solomon lived, but vowed they would not endure it under his son. The elders of churches who are inclined to "lord it over the heritage allotted to them" should take warning from the facts of this lesson.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory. Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

Can you give the historical setting of our text?

How does our text apply to our nation?

Can you show how this principle of our text applies in the home?
 What New Testament church was threatened with division?
 In what catalog of sins does Paul classify the sin of division?
 Can you state and illustrate two reasons why the sin of division is foolish?
 State and discuss four reasons why division is sinful.
 State and discuss three things to do in order to cure division.

Introduction

How many wives did Solomon have, and what did they do for his relationship toward Jehovah?
 Name some of foreign gods these women worshiped.
 What did Solomon do for them to encourage them in the worship of these heathen gods?
 What disaster did Solomon's sins bring upon the nation?
 To whom did God promise to give ten tribes?
 Which of the tribes was most jealous of the tribe of Judah?
 Why was the kingdom not divided during the life time of Solomon?

Rehoboam Answers the People

What part did the people of Israel have in the choice of their king?
 Why was this meeting to confirm Rehoboam held in Shechem instead of Jerusalem?
 On what condition did the northern tribes promise to serve Rehoboam?
 For how much time did Rehoboam ask to consider their proposition?
 With whom did Rehoboam consult in order to give answer to the tribes?
 Can you give the advice which these two groups gave Rehoboam?
 Whose advice did Rehoboam follow when he made answer to the people?

What part did Jehovah have in the division of the kingdom?

The People Reject Rehoboam

In what words did the people answer Rehoboam?
 Had this cry been made against the tribe of Judah before the time of Rehoboam?
 Were any members of the ten tribes left in the territory of Rehoboam?
 What immediate attempt did Rehoboam make to settle the division?
 Do you think that Adoram was sent to the ten tribes to conciliate or to coerce them?
 How did the people treat Adoram?
 What did Rehoboam do when he heard of the death of Adoram?

Jeroboam Made King of Israel

How did the people of the northern tribes respond to Jeroboam's leadership?
 To what extent was Judah responsible for the division?
 To what extent was Israel responsible for the division of the kingdom?
 Can you point out where both Judah and Israel were right in their contentions over this matter?
 Can you prove that both Israel and Judah did wrong in connection with this division?
 Can you show that the division of the kingdom did not correct the evils of which Israel complained?
 Did the division of the kingdom bring about the religious reform which should have been made?
 Can you explain why our text says that Rehoboam was king over the tribe of Judah only?

Relation to Our Aim

What do you know of the history of Shechem?
 For what is Rehoboam to be remembered?
 For what is Jeroboam to be remembered?
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to be remembered?

Lesson II—October 9, 1955

JEREBOAM MAKES ISRAEL TO SIN

Lesson Text

1 Kings 12: 25-33; 19: 15-18

25 Then Jer'-o-bo'-am built Shechem in the hill-country of E'-phraim, and dwelt therein; and he went out from thence, and built Pe-nu'-el.

26 And Jer-o-bo'-am said in his heart, Now will the kingdom return to the house of David:

27 If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of Je-ho'-vah at Je-ru'-sa-lem, then will the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Re-ho-bo'-am king of Ju'-dah; and they will kill me, and return to Re-ho-bo'-am king of Ju'-dah.

28 Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold; and he said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Je-ru'-sa-lem: behold thy gods, O Is'-ra-el, which

brought thee up out of the land of E'-gypt.

29 And he set the one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Dan.

30 And this thing became a sin; for the people went to *worship* before the one, even unto Dan.

31 And he made houses of high places, and made priests from among all the people, that were not of the sons of Le'-vi.

32 And Jer-o-bo'-am ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Ju'-dah, and he went up unto the altar; so did he in Beth-el, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Beth-el the priests of the high places that he had made.

33 And he went up unto the altar which he had made in Beth'-el on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart: and he ordained a feast for the children of Is'-ra-el, and went up unto the altar, to burn incense.

15 And Je-ho'-vah said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Da-mas'-cus: and when thou comest, thou shalt anoint Haz'-a-el to be king over Syr'-i-a;

16 And Je'-hu the son of Nim'shi

shalt thou anoint to be king over Is'-ra-el; and E-li'-sha the son of Sha'-phat of A'-bel-me-ho'-lah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.

17 And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth from the sword of Haz'-a-el shall Je'-hu slay; and him that escapeth from the sword of Je'-hu shall E-li'-sha slay.

18 Yet will I leave *me* seven thousand in Is'-ra-el, all the knees which have not bowed unto Ba'-al, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

Golden Text.—"*Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people.*" (Prov. 14: 34.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Kings 11: 1-3.

Daily Bible Readings

October 3.	M.....	Jeroboam Rebuked (1 Kings 13: 1-10)
October 4.	T.....	Disobedience of the Prophet (1 Kings 13: 11-32)
October 5.	W.....	Cause of Israel's Bondage (2 Kings 17: 1-23)
October 6.	T.....	Assyrian Captivity (2 Kings 17: 24-41)
October 7.	F.....	Jeroboam's Evil Influence (2 Kings 23: 15-20)
October 8.	S.....	End of Israel Foretold (Amos 8: 1-14)
October 9.	S.....	Beauty and Blessings of Unity (Psalm 133)

TIME.—975 B.C.—905 B.C.

PLACES.—Shechem, Dan, Bethel, and the wilderness of Damascus.

Persons.—Jeroboam and Elijah.

Golden Text Explained

1. Righteousness exalts a nation. In a recent lesson we have considered this text in its general bearings. At this time we will consider it in its bearing on the nation only. There are several things which tend to exalt a nation, (a) Legislation favoring the poor and the weak. The poor and the weak are not in position to make laws for themselves. They do not sit in the king's throne or the president's chair. They are not in the legislative halls of the nation. Hence, they must depend upon others to make such laws as will protect their interests. A nation which takes the poor and the weak. The poor sideration will be exalted in the eyes of God and all other right thinking nations. (1) Every nation should be concerned about the housing of the poor and needy. It is a fine thing that our government, in recent years, has given considerable attention to a program of housing the poor. There is much yet to be done clearing out slum conditions in congested areas of our large cities. (2) The poor need some assistance in maintaining good health. So, a nation which recognizes and maintains a proper health

program for the unfortunate portion of its people will be exalted. State and national hospitals are maintained for the care of the sick and insane. County health programs are also rendering valuable assistance in maintaining good health and in educating people toward better health. (3) A nation contributes to its exaltation by being mindful of the aged. Our government has an old-age assistance program, which with the years will undoubtedly be increased. But the very fact that the government is interested in such things as better housing for the poor, and a better health program, and old-age assistance for those who are not able to provide for their own comfort in the evening of life is an indication that the principles of Christ have taken hold in the hearts of men; and to the degree to which the nation responds is teaching and contributing to the comfort and happiness of these poor and needy, to that extent will the nation be exalted, (b) A nation can exalt itself by encouraging freedom. (1) The nation is exalted by encouraging religious freedom for all. God gives no

man the right to teach false doctrine. But neither a dictator, a king, nor a president has any right to determine what is false and what is true in the realm of religion, and allow only that which he considers to be truth to be taught. Hence, from a political point of view, every man has a right to teach that which he conceives to be the truth of God. And that government which favors one religious group above all others, and favors it by giving it religious freedom which is denied to all other religious groups, does that which can do only the opposite of exalting it in the eyes of right-thinking people. (2) The freedom of speech. Freedom of religion is included in freedom of speech because we exercise our right to express our religious convictions. But freedom of speech is wider in its application than religious freedom because we maintain, not only the right to express our religious convictions, but also our political convictions and desires. Fair and equitable dealings on the part of the government obligates the government to allow to every citizen the same freedom to express himself. (3) Self-government is a part of that freedom which every nation should encourage. No man has any inherent right to rule over other people. People have a right to say who will rule them and what type of government they are willing to live under. A government which enslaves its people is not exalted. (c) A government exalts itself by encouraging a program of world peace. (1) A government

which helps weak and backward nations in a self-improvement program exalts itself in the eyes of God and right-thinking people. (2) Helping weak nations to resist strong aggressor nations is also a means of exalting a government.

2. Sin is a reproach to any people. There are many ways by which a government or nations may cover itself with shame and disgrace. We mention three. (a) Aggression by slaughter of weaker people. Ambition for more territory and more citizens to satisfy one's thirst for power and wealth is a sin in the sight of God, and a course of action which is becoming more and more unpopular among men. We can devoutly wish that the time will speedily come when world opinion will not allow a strong nation to enslave the weak, (b) Persecution of minorities. Our generation has seen several nations under Homan Catholic domination persecute minor religious bodies within their territory to the point of physical violence. Governments which deal in persecutions of political minorities do themselves much harm, but governments which allow a religious ruler to use them for persecution of religious minorities sink to unspeakable depths of shame and infamy, (c) Exclusion of God by legislation. The nation which legislates against the distribution of the word of God or the reading of the word of God in public gatherings does that which brings reproach upon the nation and brings darkness to the people.

Introduction

In our last lesson we learned about the division of the kingdom, brought on by the pride, the arrogance, and the stupidity of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. When he had lost one man in a weak and futile attempt to bring the rebels back, Rehoboam went to Jerusalem and assembled the largest army possible from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. He managed to gather 180,000 men to put into the field against the new kingdom, that he might bring it back into subjection to the throne of David. But the Lord interfered with his plans by sending a prophet by the name of Shemaiah. This prophet was to take the following message to Rehoboam. "Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the chil-

dren of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is of me." God allowed the division to come as a punishment for the sins of Solomon. If he allowed Rehoboam to continue with his plans, there would be a needless slaughter of thousands on both sides. Furthermore, it is possible that the trained men of Rehoboam's army, and with better equipment than the ten tribes had, could have won the battle and for a time forced the ten tribes into submission. But the only thing that we can find in this whole affair to the credit of Rehoboam is that he listened to the word of Jehovah and did not send his army into the field against the Israelites.

Exposition of the Text

I. Jeroboam Leads Israel into Idolatry (1 Kings 12: 25-30)

Then Jeroboam built Shechem. We are told that the Hebrew word may be translated either built or fortified. Since they had the meeting of all Israel at Shechem (1 Kings 12: 1), we conclude that Shechem was already a city of some size. Hence, we conclude that Jeroboam fortified Shechem instead of building the city. We are told that Jeroboam made Shechem his home and the capital city of his nation. We are also told that this was in the hill country of Ephraim, which was a mountain district in Ephraim, in the very central portion of Palestine, and said to be one of the richest and most beautiful parts of the land.

He went out from thence, and built Penuel. This city was on the east side of the Jordan River. The fortifying of this city was no doubt a gesture in favor of the two and a half tribes on that side of the Jordan. It gave them assurance of military protection in time of danger and was one way for Jeroboam to show his interest in these people and his appreciation for their loyalty.

Now will the kingdom return to the house of David. This was the one paramount fear in the heart of Jeroboam. He had been successful in driving a wedge between Ephraim and Judah. His great question now was, will he be able to keep them separated.

If this people go up to offer sacrifices. Jeroboam knew that people who worship together will live together. So his only hope of keeping them permanently divided was to separate them in their worship. The annual feasts in Jerusalem would bring the people from one end of Palestine to the other together three times a year. The social intercourse enjoyed by the people as they traveled to and from these annual feasts meant a lot to the people and to the peace of the nation. Furthermore, this would keep alive in the hearts of all the people of Jeroboam the idea that Jerusalem is the place for worship, and therefore the king, whose capital is Jerusalem, must be the selection of the Lord to rule his people. People in that age of the world were not capable of making distinctions between church and state as we make today. We should notice two things

that Jeroboam admits in his heart.

(a) The temple in Jerusalem was the house of Jehovah. Jeroboam knew enough about the circumstances under which the temple was built and the service of dedication and other things, which proved the presence of Jehovah in that house. So in his own heart he admitted that Judah had a relation with Jehovah that his kingdom did not and could not have.

(b) He admitted that Rehoboam was the lord or ruler of the people. This he admitted when he said, "This will the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam, king of Judah." In this meditation he seems to admit to himself that God had established the throne in the house of David, and since he was not a descendant of David, he had no right to be the ruler of the people.

And they will kill me. His fear was that the people would realize that they had left the temple as the place where men were to worship God, and they had left the throne of David by which men ought to be ruled, and they would recognize him as an impostor and kill him and return in their loyalty to Jerusalem and to the seed of David.

Made two calves of gold. Why Jeroboam made his idols in the form of calves is not known. Some think that it was because of Egyptian influence upon him. He had spent some time in Egypt because of Solomon's effort to destroy him. (1 Kings 11: 40.) His wife was the daughter of the king of Egypt, and may have influenced Jeroboam to use these calves.

It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. According to this translation, Jeroboam told the people that it was too far for them to go to Jerusalem for their worship. It is not difficult to convince people that they are doing too much for the Lord. It is always difficult to get people to believe that they are not doing enough, and so to increase their labors. But, if it only be suggested that they are doing too much, they are always willing to decrease their labors and their sacrifices for the Lord. But, according to the margin, and some other Hebrew scholars, Jeroboam is supposed to have said, "Ye have gone up long enough to Jerusalem." Since Bethel was less than a half day's journey from Jeru-

salem, it would seem a little weak for Jeroboam to argue that they should worship a calf in Bethel because it was too far to go to Jerusalem to worship Jehovah. But whatever his meaning was, he got the idea across, and the people accepted his recommendation.

He set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. Bethel was in the extreme southern portion of his kingdom, and Dan was in the extreme northern portion of the kingdom. Those who are more concerned with convenience than they are with conscience may be expected to corrupt the pure worship of Jehovah.

II. Jeroboam Changes Times and Form of Worship (1 Kings 12: 31-33)

This thing became a sin. This was a sin because it violated the first two of the ten commandments. When Jeroboam made his calves of gold, he said to the people, "Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." So they worshiped these as the gods that delivered them from bondage. Next, this was a sin because the second commandment said that the people should not make any graven image or bow down thereto. (Ex. 20: 1-4.) So when these people bowed down before these images of gold, they were violating the first two of the ten commandments. And people who use images in their worship are violating the command of God even though they claim they do not worship the image but only use it as an aid to worship. If someone wonders how people could turn so quickly from the worship of Jehovah to the worship of these images, they should be reminded that for a long time Solomon had encouraged just such a thing by building temples for his idolatrous wives to use in their worship of such images. So Solomon's sins had prepared the way for the sins of Jeroboam.

He made houses of high places. God had forbidden the people to make their offerings anywhere except on the altar at Jerusalem. People at various times disregarded this commandment and established what was known as "high places," which were nothing more than places for offerings. Jeroboam made a house at Dan and one at Bethel for these high places. This simply means that he built a house or a temple at these

places so as to centralize the worship of his people in these two cities.

Made priests from among all the people. It seems that Jeroboam did not even want the priests to serve in his temples, "for Jeroboam and his sons cast them off, that they should not execute the priest's office unto Jehovah; and he appointed him priests for the high places, and for the he-goats, and for the calves which he had made." (2 Chron. 11: 13-15.) Being refused any part of the worship, these priests and Levites left the territory of Jeroboam and moved into Judah.

Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month. This was in imitation of the feast of tabernacles, which was held in Jerusalem on the fifteenth day of the seventh month of the year. This was also called the feast of harvest or the feast of ingathering. It was a time of great rejoicing and feasting. (Neh. 8: 9-12.) It was wise for Jeroboam to give his people a system of worship similar to that to which they had been accustomed, and which they thought was right. Any system of false worship, which includes enough of the truth to hold the people, and yet has enough of falsehood to displease God, is the devil's most successful instrument of destruction. That is the thing which makes some present-day denominations a great force for destruction. They have enough truth to attract and satisfy the people. Yet, they contain enough error and human tradition to displease God.

The month which he had devised of his own heart. The seventh month was the month which God devised and authorized. It was therefore the proper and scriptural time for people to engage in this particular worship. But for convenience or some other worldly consideration, Jeroboam preferred to hold this worship in the eighth month. This was a month devised in his own heart, and authorized by no higher authority than Jeroboam himself. Thus we notice how God draws a contrast between that which was authorized by the Lord and that which was devised in a man's heart. If he was as particular as that in the time of Jeroboam, surely he would be as particular about such things under the Christian dispensation.

And went up unto the altar, to burn incense. It is said repeatedly that Jeroboam went up to the altar

to conduct worship thereon. Some think that he went personally to the altar in the capacity of a high priest, that he might consolidate within himself the civil and the ecclesiastical powers. Others think that he performed this service as a matter of encouragement to these men whom he had appointed as priests. The experiences of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10), as well as the experiences of Korah and his company (Num. 16), might have put fear into the hearts of these common people who were appointed to do the work of common priests. If such fears were in the hearts of these men, that fear was well grounded as is shown by what happened to Jeroboam in the following chapter, to which they did not know the answer. (1 Kings 18: 15-18.)

III. Jehovah Punishes Israel (1 Kings 19: 15-18)

Return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus. This is Jehovah's instruction to Elijah. This is following his experience with Ahab, Jezebel, and the prophets of Baal. When Jezebel threatened to do for Elijah what he had done for the prophets of Baal, Elijah fled to Mount Sinai, where he learned that God moves, not in the storm or the fire or the earthquake, but in the still small voice, to accomplish his purposes in the lives of men. Having learned this lesson, and having his faith renewed, Elijah was ready to go back into Israel and continue to serve the Lord in whatever way he was capable of serving.

Thou shalt anoint Hazael to be king over Syria. We have some difficulty with this verse because, so far as the record goes, we do not know that Elijah anointed either Hazael or Jehu. He called Elisha into the service as his successor. In 2 Kings 8: 8-15 we have a record of Elisha talking with Hazael, telling him that he was to be king over Syria in the place of Benhadad, but again no mention is made of an anointing.

Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel. In 2 Kings 9: 6 we have the record of

Elisha sending one of the sons of the prophets to anoint Jehu to be king over Israel, and giving him the commission to destroy the house of Ahab. In view of the history which follows, we must conclude that this commission to Elijah was to be carried out either personally or by those who should succeed him in his office.

Elisha . . . shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. In the second chapter of 2 Kings we have a beautiful story of Elijah being taken up into heaven and Elisha recovering Elijah's mantle and receiving a double portion of his spirit. Elisha was a refined, quiet, gentle man, the opposite of the harsh, rough, brusque-mannered Elijah. Elijah compares well to John the Baptist, while Elisha is more like Jesus in his mild manners.

Him that escapeth from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay. When Elisha was sent to tell Hazael that he would be king in the place of Benhadad, Elisha wept. When Hazael asked him why he wept, Elisha replied, "Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strongholds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash in pieces their little ones, and rip up their women with child." (2 Kings 8: 12.) Those who escaped Hazael should be slain by Jehu, who was commissioned to destroy the house of Ahab. He not only destroyed the house of Ahab, but he destroyed a great number of the people of Israel who were worshipers of Baal. (2 Kings 10: 18-28.)

Yet will I leave me seven thousand in Israel. In spite of the prevalence of idolatry in Israel, Jehovah said there would be seven thousand whose knees had not bowed unto Baal. This was said for the encouragement of Elijah, for he had supposed that he was the only one left who had not gone into idolatry. He said when at Sinai, "I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword: and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." (1 Kings 19: 14.)

Relation to Our Aim

1. Places to be remembered, (a) Bethel. The word Bethel means house of God. This is the place

where Jacob had his vision of a ladder reaching from earth to heaven with angels ascending and descend-

ing In times of trouble during the days of the judges, the people went to Bethel to inquire for direction of God. (Judges 20: 18; 21: 2.) And even when Israel had been carried into Assyrian captivity, Bethel still remained an abode of the priests who taught the people how to fear Jehovah, the God of the land. (2 Kings 17: 28, 27.) (b) Dan. The reader will find it interesting to see how this city got its name. (Judges 18: 21-31.) The city has little importance in the history of Israel, Being at the extreme north end, it came to be referred to as one extremity of the land, while Beersheba was the other.

2. Persons to be remembered, (a) Elijah suddenly appears during the reign of Ahab. We know little about Elijah, except that, as did John the Baptist, he lived in the deserts. His mission was to overthrow the worship of Baal in Israel, (b) Elisha. Though the successor of Elijah, Elisha was a calm, quiet person, who associated with kings and princes, as well as with the common people.

3. Facts to be remembered. (a) Jeroboam established an idolatrous system of worship in order to hold his subjects in his kingdom. (b) Jeroboam changed the form of worship, the time of worship, and the priesthood, (c) Seven thousand were faithful to God in spite of the idolatrous environment in which they lived.

4. Lessons to be remembered, (a) Political ambition can cause men to depart from God. Jeroboam was anxious to be king and to hold the people in his territory. He knew that if he allowed them to return to Jerusalem for worship, he would lose them. So his ambition caused him to depart from God to go into idolatry. (b) The devisings of men's hearts are not pleasing to God. Jeroboam patterned his worship after the true form of worship, but changed it sufficiently to keep people in error, and so to depart from God. (c) What seven thousand did in remaining faithful to God, all others could have done, had they so desired. Hence, there was no excuse for their going into idolatry.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

State and discuss three ways in which a nation may exalt itself through legislation favoring the poor and the weak.

State and discuss three ways a nation may exalt itself by encouraging freedom.

In what way may a government exalt itself by encouraging a program of world peace?

Do you believe that aggression will exalt or reproach a nation?

Do you believe that the neglect or persecution of minorities within a nation is right or wrong?

Does a nation exalt or reproach itself by excluding God by legislation?

Introduction

After the death of Adoram what move did Rehoboam make to put down rebellion in his kingdom?

Why did Rehoboam abandon his plans to put down the rebellion?

Since they were allowed to fight at a later time, why do you think God interfered at this time?

What can be said to the credit of Rehoboam in this matter?

Jeroboam Leads Israel into Idolatry

What is said in our lesson about the city of Shechem?

What do you know about the fortifying of the city of Penuel?

What was Jeroboam's greatest concern after he was made king?

What did Jeroboam admit in his heart with reference to Jerusalem?

What did he admit in his heart with reference to Rehoboam?

What did Jeroboam do to keep the people from going back to Jerusalem?

What reason did he give the people for changing the place of worship?

In what portions of his kingdom did he establish these places of worship?

Jeroboam Changes Time and Form of Worship

What commandments of God did Jeroboam violate when he changed the form of worship?

How were the people prepared for this change in the form of worship?

What were "high places," and how many did Jeroboam build?

Whom did Jeroboam use for priests?

Why did Jeroboam give his people a system of worship similar to that which God endorsed?

Can you name three points wherein the system of worship inaugurated by Jeroboam differed from that given by the Lord through Moses?

Did Jeroboam take part personally in these unscriptural forms of worship?

Jehovah Punishes Israel

Why had Elijah fled to Sinai?

Whom was he to anoint king over Syria?

Whom was Elijah to anoint as king over Israel?

Who was to be made prophet in the place of Elijah?

Why did Elisha weep when he told Hazael he was to be king of Syria?

How many people were faithful to Jehovah in those days, and how did that agree with Elijah's opinion?

Relation to Our Aim

What do you know of the town of Bethel?
 What do you know of the town of Dan?
 Can you contrast the character and work

of Elijah and Elisha?

What are the outstanding facts of this lesson?
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson III—October 16, 1955

THE ASSYRIAN CAPTIVITY

Lesson Text

2 Kings 17: 1-6; 18: 8-12

1 In the twelfth year of A-haz king of Ju'-dah began Hó-she'a the son of E'-lah to reign in Sa-ma'-ri-a over Is'-ra-el, and reigned nine years.

2 And he did that which was evil in the sight of Je-ho'-vah, yet not as the kings of Is'-ra-el that were before him.

3 Against him came up Shal-ma-ne'-ser king of As-syr'-i-a; and Hó-she'-a became his servant, and brought him tribute.

4 And the king of As-syr'-i-a found conspiracy in Ho-she'-a; for he had sent messengers to So king of E'-gypt, and offered no tribute to the king of As-syr'-i-a, as he had done year by year: therefore the king of As-syr'-i-a shut him up, and bound him in prison.

5 Then the king of As-syr'-i-a came up throughout all the land, and went up to Sa-ma'-ri-a, and besieged it three years.

6 In the ninth year of Hó-she'-a the king of As-syr'-i-a took Sa-ma'-ri-a, and carried Is'-ra-el away unto As-syr'-i-a, and placed them in Ha'-lah, and on the Ha'-bor, the river

of Go'-zan, and in the cities of the Medes.

8 He smote the Phi-lis'-tines unto Ga'-za and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fortified city.

9 And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hez-e-ki'-ah, which was the seventh year of Hó-she'-a son of E'-lah king of Is'-ra-el, that Shal-ma-ne'-ser king of As-syr'-i-a came up against Sa-ma'-ri-a, and besieged it.

10 And at the end of three years they took it: in the sixth year of Hez-e-ki'-ah, which was the ninth year of Hó-she'-a king of Is'-ra-el, Sa-ma'-ri-a was taken.

11 And the king of As-syr'-i-a carried Is'-ra-el away unto As-syr'-i-a, and put them in Ha'-lah, and on the Ha'-bor, the river of Go'-zan, and in the cities of the Medes,

12 Because they obeyed not the voice of Je-ho'-vah their God, but transgressed his covenant, even all that Mó'-ses the servant of Je-ho'-vah commanded, and would not hear it, nor do it.

Golden Text.—*"And they forsook all the commandments of Jehovah their God . . . Therefore Jehovah was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight"* (2 Kings 17: 16, 18.)

Devotional Reading.—Isa. 19: 23-25.

Daily Bible Readings

- October 10. M..... The Assyrian Exile (2 Kings 17: 6-12)
- October 11. T..... Israel's Overthrow Predicted (Amos 4: 6-13)
- October 12. W..... Warning Ignored (Amos 5: 1-9)
- October 13. T..... Rebellious Israel (2 Kings 7: 13-18)
- October 14. F..... Aliens in Samaria (2 Kings 17: 24-29)
- October 15. S..... Corrupted Worship (2 Kings 17: 30-36)
- October 16. S..... Conditions As Described by Micah (Micah 1: 1-16)

Time.—730-721 B.C.

Places.—Samaria and Assyria.

Persons.—Shalmaneser of Assyria and Hoshea and the people of Israel.

Golden Text Explained

1. They forsook the commandments. (a) Our text says that the people of Israel forsook all the commandments of Jehovah. But a number of them are specified in the context of our lesson. The first thing

that is said about them is that they feared other gods. (2 Kings 17: 7.) The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom, but the fear of other gods is the beginning of apostasy. Had these people feared only Jehovah, they would not have forsaken any of the commandments of God. Then in verse 9 we read that the children of Israel did secretly several things that were not right in the sight of God. Their fear of other gods led them to do things in worship to other gods, but as yet they were ashamed to come out in the open and practice these sins. So they practiced them secretly. Next, we learn that they built high places in all their cities. In this they came out openly in their sin. When they began to fear other gods more than they feared Jehovah, they began to come out into the open with their sins. In verse 10 we see them setting up pillars, which were stumps of trees, carved in the likeness of their gods. And in verse 11 we find them burning incense to these gods. Step by step we have seen them go from a hidden fear for other gods to outright idolatry in the worship of idols. Then in verse 16 we see them worshipping the calves which Jeroboam made, and added to that they "worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal." By the expression, "host of heaven" is meant the worship of the sun, moon, and stars. Then in verse 17, we see them causing their children to pass through the fire, which means nothing less than the burning of their children, which was an old Canaanitish custom, and was practiced later by the Moabites and Ammonites, (b) They forsook all the commandments of God in spite of Jehovah's continued entreaties to the contrary. "Yet Jehovah testified unto Israel, and unto Judah, by every prophet, and every seer, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. Notwithstanding, they would not hear, but hardened their neck, like to the neck of their fathers, who believed not in Jehovah their God." (2 Kings 17: 13, 14.) Paul teaches us that God has never left his people without sufficient warning to keep them from losing a knowledge of his power and his divinity. (Rom. 1: 18-21.) (c) We are told that these Israelites for-

sook the commandments of Jehovah to be like the nations round about them. "And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified unto them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the nations that were round about them, concerning whom Jehovah had charged them that they should not do like them." (2 Kings 17: 15.) This reminds us of Paul's description of the Gentile world in his day. (Eph. 4: 17-19.)

2. Jehovah was very angry. (a) Jehovah is provoked by sin. "And there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the nations whom Jehovah carried away before them; and they wrought wicked things to provoke Jehovah to anger." (2 Kings 17: 11.) We are told that the sins of the people during the wilderness wandering provoked Jehovah to anger. Moses made a statement to the Israelites who wished to stay on the east side of Jordan, which shows us how God may be provoked to anger. He said, "Ye are risen up in your fathers' stead, an increase of sinful men, to augment yet the fierce anger of Jehovah toward Israel." (Num. 32: 14.) (b) Though Jehovah may be provoked to anger, we are told that he is slow to anger. "Jehovah is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness." (Psalms 103: 8.) And each one of us may rejoice in the fact that God is slow to anger, for Peter tells us that it is his longsuffering which means our salvation. (2 Pet. 3: 15.)

(c) Jehovah's anger is in harmony with his holiness. David said he hated every false way because he had an understanding of God. (Psalm 119: 104.) If an understanding of God's holiness will lead us to hate sin, how great must be the hatred of God, who is infinitely holy, against sin. So great is his hatred of sin that David speaks of him as hating the sinner. "The arrogant shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity. . . . Jehovah abhorreth the bloodthirsty and deceitful man." Psalms 5: 5, 6; see also Psalms 11: 5.)

3. Jehovah removed them out of his sight. Jehovah proclaims himself to be abundant in lovingkindness and forgiveness, but "will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's

children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation." (Ex. 34: 7.) The prophet tells us, "Jehovah is a jealous God and avengeth; Jehovah avengeth and is full of wrath; Jehovah taketh vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies." (Nah. 1: 2, 3.) (b) This should serve as a warning for us today. Paul tells us that, through hardness and impenitence, we may treasure up for ourselves wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will inflict upon the disobedient wrath, indignation, tribula-

tion, and anguish. (Rom. 2: 4-10.) And then he tells us that Jesus will be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and the glory of his might. (2 Thess. 1: 7-10) God's dealings with the disobedient Israelites should teach us the lesson that the infliction of punishment upon the disobedient is not contrary to the nature of God.

Introduction

The Assyrian captivity came somewhat in degrees or stages. There was not just one great drive to round up the people and drive them out of Israel into Assyria. In fact, fifty years were consumed in bringing about the subjugation and captivity of the nation of Israel. The first drive was made in 771 B.C. by Pul, king Assyria. "There came against the land Pul the king of Assyria; and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with him to confirm the kingdom in his hand. And Menahem exacted the money of Israel, even of all the mighty men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back, and stayed not there in the land." (2 Kings 15: 19, 20.) This was fifty

years before the final subjugation of Samaria, and it was a hundred and eighty-five years before the fall of Jerusalem. The second raid made by the Assyrians on Israel was made in 740 B.C. This raid was led by Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria. In 2 Kings 15: 29 we are told that he took Gilead, while in 1 Chron. 5: 26, where his name has a different spelling, we are told that he took the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half-tribe of Manasseh, who lived on the east side of Jordan. The word Gilead is used to stand for the territory of these two and one-half tribes. He also took Galilee and all the land of Naphtali. This raid occurred nineteen years before the final fall of Samaria, and one hundred and fifty four years before the destruction of Jerusalem.

Exposition of the Text

I. Israel Under Tribute to Assyria (2 Kings 17: 1-3)

Began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria. In the kingdom of Judah there was no revolution on change from one king to another, the son inheriting the throne from his father. But it was not so in Israel. Though Israel had about the same number of kings that Judah had during its longer existence, Israel had nine different dynasties, and each one was ushered in by a revolution. In 2 Kings 15: 30 we are told that Hoshea made a conspiracy against Pekah and smote him and slew him and reigned in his stead in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah. From the fact that it is said that Hoshea made a conspiracy against Pekah, we conclude that he had the permission of the king of Assyria to kill Pekah and take his

place. Pekah's death had been foreseen and foretold by Isaiah. (Isa. 7: 16.) Though Hoshea is said to have done evil in the sight of the Lord, it is also added that he did not as much evil as the kings of Israel that were before him. He is usually counted as the best king that Israel had. However, we know very little about the virtues of this king, which caused the Holy Spirit to say that he was not as evil as the kings before him. The golden calves made by Jeroboam had been removed in former raids by the Assyrians, and it seems that Hoshea did not institute any new idolatry. And it is possible that he allowed his people to attend the festival worship at Jerusalem. (2 Chron. 30: 11, 18.) Others contend that Hoshea's superiority to the other kings of Israel consisted in his attitude toward his subjects.

Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria. Adam Clarke says that this Shalmaneser was the son of Tiglath-pileser, whom he succeeded on the throne, but other authorities cast considerable doubt upon this. Very little is known of Shalmaneser because Sargon, his successor, was of a different family and destroyed the records and monuments left by Shalmaneser.

And Hoshea became his servant, and brought him tribute. It seems that upon the death of Tiglath-pileser Israel thought she saw an opportunity to become free of the tax burden which Assyria had levied upon her. But when she missed her first payment, Shalmaneser came with an army demanding that the payment to resume. There seems to have been no struggle at this time, Hoshea promising to continue the payment of tribute. Amos and Hoshea prophesied during this time and give us a good picture of the religious and moral condition just prior to the fall of Israel. Summing up their sins, one writer says, "Amos indicated the whole nation, princes, priests, merchants, women, and the people themselves. The sight of sacred prostitution openly practiced in the sanctuaries in imitation of Canaanitish rights; the moral deterioration of Israel, due to the luxurious living of the wealthy, and callous disregard for the sufferings of the poor inflicted by remorseless creditors and dishonest traitors; the venality of judges, who were bribed to flagrant acts of injustice; the corruption of the priesthood; the indifference of rulers to social conditions: these he denounced with a passion which must have stupefied his hearers. The idea, however, that evoked his sharpest sarcasm (4: 4-6; 8: 4-6) and bitterest invective (5: 21-24) was the belief that sacrifice and ceremonial was the essence of religion rather than righteousness and justice. The conventional notion among his contemporaries was that sacrifices were both a thanksgiving to God for mercies received and the means of securing his future favors. Personal and social ethics did not enter into the relationship between God and his people at all. As against all this Amos proclaimed that ritual without righteousness was abhorrent to God and a degradation to the very idea of religion itself." (Calkins.) This

same writer sums up the teaching of Hosea by saying, "It is noticeable, that unlike Amos and Micah, Hosea was not so much concerned with social questions, the sins of men against their fellow men, as with their sin against the love of God. They have not shown their constancy, their loyalty to him by lives of purity, of right living, of sobriety and self-control. On the contrary, they had given themselves over to self-indulgence, to perjury, lying, adultery. Thus their sacrifices are meaningless. They are a faithless and adulterous generation, guilty of every crime abominated by a just and loving God. The result of all this is that they are corrupt in mind and heart. (5:

11.) Immorality has destroyed both intelligence and conscience. (4: 12.) With insight and passion Hosea presses home this close connection between sins of immorality and the integrity of the personal life, and so of the social order."

II. Conspiracy and Capture of Israel (2 Kings 17: 4-6)

The king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea. We are not told how long Hoshea continued to pay his tribute before he conspired with other small nations in an effort to break away from Assyria.

He had sent messengers to So king of Egypt. Hosea, the prophet, either knew of this conspiracy on the part of Hoshea or the Holy Spirit inspired him to see that Hoshea would do such a thing. He says, "And Ephraim is like a silly dove, without understanding: they call unto Egypt, they go to Assyria." (Hos. 7: 11.) Referring to Ephraim, another term for Israel, as a silly dove is a strong figure of speech. The dove is guileless and easy to snare. So Israel, according to the prophet was a thoughtless nation, easy to be caught in a trap. Again, the prophet said, "Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind; he continually multiplieth lies and desolation; and they make a covenant with Assyria, and oil is carried into Egypt." (Hos. 12: 1.) The east wind in Palestine often brings destructive storms. So Hosea says that Israel is following a destructive course by multiplying lies and making covenants with both Assyria and Egypt. They had no choice in the matter of the covenant with Assyria because Shalmaneser had forced them by a superior army

to make that covenant and pay tribute. In order to break away from Assyria, they had gone to Egypt for assistance, but since Egypt was an enemy of Assyria, Israel showed herself to be a silly dove again by trying to think that she could make a covenant with Egypt which Assyria would permit.

Therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison. Some think that Hoshea was taken prisoner on the arrival of the Assyrian army, and that he was kept in prison the rest of his life. They take this position because his imprisonment is mentioned in verse 4, while the city of Samaria held out under siege for nearly three years longer. But since there is no mention of such capture, and imprisonment before the fall of Samaria, there is no need for such conclusion. The ultimate end to which this sinful king came is expressed in the fourth verse and then in verses 5 and 6, a more detailed explanation is given. We are told that Samaria fell in the ninth year of the reign of Hoshea. If he had been captured and imprisoned three years previous to this, he would not have been mentioned as the reigning king at the time Samaria fell.

Went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. Since So, the king of Egypt, did not come to the rescue of Hoshea, we can understand why the prophet would say that he was like "a silly dove" for making an alliance with the king of Egypt. The king of Egypt did not care to risk the lives of his soldiers to protect a king who could be of no more value to him than could Hoshea.

In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria. It should be noticed that the scripture does not say that Shalmaneser captured Samaria. The record simply says that the king of Assyria took Samaria. During the siege of Samaria, Shalmaneser lost his throne to Sargon. We do not know whether Shalmaneser died a natural death or whether he was killed and his throne taken by Sargon. Sargon does not claim to be the son of Shalmaneser, and avoids all mention of the name of his father. In his records he claims to have captured Samaria in the first year of his reign. Sargon is mentioned only in Isa. 20: 1, and for a long time critics said there was no such king, and so accused the Bible

writers of manufacturing a story. But finally archaeologists uncovered Assyrian inscriptions which proved that Sargon was a real character and one of the greatest kings which Assyria had. In Sargon's record of the siege of Samaria he says that he took the city and carried off twenty-seven thousand two hundred and eighty of its citizens; that he chose fifty chariots for himself of the whole number taken, and appointed resident officers over the few who were left and imposed on them the same tribute that had formerly been paid. He also makes mention of the fact that to replace captives who were taken from the land he sent inhabitants, which he had conquered from other lands, as well as some from Assyria, that the land of Israel might not be desolate. That Samaria could hold out against a powerful Assyrian army for three years is due to the fact that it was well located and fortified to withstand such a siege. We are told that it was situated on a long hill with steep approaches. The Syrian armies tried twice to capture the city but failed.

And carried Israel away unto Assyria. Several names of cities and regions are given as places to which the captives were carried. They are all located in what may be called northern Mesopotamia. "The ultimate fate of the ten tribes has been a subject of endless controversy. It seems beyond doubt, however, that they were ultimately lost—by intermarriage and loss of tribal exclusiveness—among the nations to whose lands they were carried, in successive deportations, extending through many years. Some were settled in the districts already named; others were transported to Media, where we find them in the time of Tobit, at Rages, not far from Teheran in Persia. . . . Many more were carried prisoners to Egypt by the Nile kings, and many went there voluntarily, while there was hardly a land in the Mediterranean, wither vast numbers had not been sold as slaves." (Geikie.)

III. Disobedience the Cause of Downfall (2 Kings 18: 8-12)

In the fourth year of king Hezekiah. Hezekiah was a king of Judah, and the writer wishes to relate the reigns of Hezekiah and Hoshea, the king of Samaria. He says that it was in the fourth year of Heze-

kiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea, the year which saw the beginning of the siege of Samaria. It is this passage which tells us that the siege of Samaria began in the seventh year of the reign of Hoshea, while in the passage considered above we learned that Samaria fell in the ninth year of the reign of Hoshea. According to Jewish usage, speaking of a part of a year as a whole year, it is possible that the siege of Samaria did not last three full years. In fact, if it had lasted only fourteen months, the first month being in the seventh year of Hosea's reign and the fourteenth month being in the ninth year of his reign, the siege would still have been spoken of as lasting three years.

Because they obeyed not the voice of Jehovah their God. About the only new item which this section of our text presents is the reason for the captivity of Israel. Here it is stated that they were carried away captive because they disobeyed the voice of Jehovah their God. This was in harmony with the prophecy of

Moses concerning their future. He said, "Jehovah will bring thee, and thy king whom thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation that thou hast not known, thou nor thy fathers; and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone. And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a by word among all the peoples whither Jehovah shall lead thee away. . . Thou shalt beget sons and daughters, but they shall not be thine; for they shall go into captivity. . . . And all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedest not unto the voice of Jehovah thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee: and they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever." (Deut. 28: 36-46.) In this connection the reader should read 2 Kings 17: 7-23 for a fuller description of the sins which Israel committed in spite of the efforts which Jehovah made to keep them from committing such sins.

Relation to Our Aim

1. Places to be remembered. Samaria is the only place of interest in our lesson today. This city was about six miles northwest of Shechem. It lay in the valley of Shechem, but was situated on a high oblong hill with steep, yet accessible sides. This hill was chosen by Omri, one of the kings of Israel, and the capital was moved from Shechem, where Jeroboam had his capital, to Samaria.

2. Persons to be remembered, (a) Shalmaneser. Shalmaneser succeeded Tiglath-pileser to the throne of Assyria. It seems he preferred the collection of tribute from Samaria rather than the destruction of the city. But when Hoshea formed an alliance with the king of Egypt, there was nothing left but to subjugate the city, (b) Hoshea. He was the nineteenth and the last of the kings of Israel. None of the kings got away from the idolatry which was instituted by Jeroboam. But Hoshea was a better king than those before him in several different ways, (c) Sargon. This man succeeded Shalmaneser to the throne of Assyria. Until recent times he was unknown to profane historians, causing some to doubt the accuracy of Bible

records. But archeological discoveries have provided abundant material to prove his right to a place among the great kings of Assyria.

3. Facts to be remembered, (a) Hoshea was foolish to make an alliance with the king of Egypt when Shalmaneser had demonstrated his willingness to be satisfied with a reasonable tribute, (b) Samaria fell in 721 B.C. This was one hundred and thirty-five years before the fall of Jerusalem. The kingdom of Israel lasted only two hundred and fifty-four years.

4. Lessons to remember, (a) Earthly combinations cannot help us when God decides to send punishment. The Assyrians were selected as instruments through which God would punish his people for their sins. Neither Egypt nor any combination of several nations could have prevented that punishment. (b) Sin has its effect on nations as well as individuals. A long list of nations could be made which have fallen because of sin within. When nations become powerful, they tend to become careless of their morals, and so weaken within that they cannot resist the pressure from without, (c) God may be slow to punish, but

he is both sure and terrible in his punishment of sin. No one can read of God's dealings with wicked men

and nations and not be impressed with the fact that sin brings terrible suffering and destruction.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

What was Israel's first step in departing from God?

What was their first step in open sin against God?

What was their third step in this series of sins?

What is meant by the host of heaven which they worshiped?

What religious rites were practiced which involved their children?

What did Jehovah do to keep the people from forsaking him?

For what purpose did the people forsake the commandments of Jehovah?

What effect did the people's disobedience have on Jehovah?

What do you know of Jehovah's anger?

What punishment did God bring upon these people for their sins?

What effect should this example of righteous punishment have upon us?

Introduction

How many years were consumed in the subjugation and captivity of Israel?

Tell of the first raid made by Pul, king of Assyria.

Under what king of Assyria was the second raid made, and what portion of the country did he take?

How long was this before the final captivity of Israel?

Israel Under Tribute To Assyria

How many dynasties did Israel have during her existence?

How did Hoshea come to the throne of Israel?

What is said of the character of this king?

Did he attempt to destroy idolatry in his kingdom?

Why is so little known of Shalmaneser, king of Assyria?

Why did Shalmaneser come against Samaria at this time?

What do you know of the moral condition of Israel at this time?

What do you know of their conception of religion?

What is said of the lack of love in people's hearts for God?

Conspiracy and Capture of Israel

With whom did Hoshea enter into conspiracy against Assyria?

What did the prophet Hosea say of Israel for this conspiracy?

How long did Assyria lay siege to the city of Samaria?

What is the name of the king who finally captured Samaria?

What do you know of Sargon and his mention by sacred and profane historians?

What is said of the ultimate fate of the ten tribes?

Disobedience the Cause of Downfall

What was the name of the king reigning in Judah at the time of the fall of Samaria?

What reason is assigned in our text for the captivity of Israel?

What did Moses predict about these matters?

Relation To Our Aim

What do you know of the location and the history of Samaria?

For what is Shalmaneser to be remembered?

What do you know of Hoshea?

For what is Sargon to be remembered?

In what year did Samaria fall?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to be remembered?

Lesson IV—October 23, 1955

JUDAH THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM

Lesson Text

1 Kings 12: 21-24; 15: 9-15; 2 Kings 18: 1-7

21 And when Re-ho-bo'am was come to Je-ru'-sa-lem, he assembled all the house of Ju'-dah, and the tribe of Ben'-ja-min, a hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, that were warriors, to fight against the house of Is'-ra-el, to bring the kingdom again to Re-ho-bo'am the son of Sol'-o-mon.

22 But the word of God came unto She-ma'-iah the man of God, saying,

23 Speak unto Re-ho-bo'am the son of Sol'-o-mon, king of Ju'-dah, and unto all the house of Ju'-dah and Ben'-ja-min, and to the rest of the people, saying,

24 Thus saith Je-ho'-vah, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Is'-ra-el: return every man to his house; for this thing is of me. So they hearkened unto the word of Je-ho'-vah, and returned and went their way, according to the word of Je-ho'-vah.

9 And in the twentieth year of Jer-ó-bo'am king of Is'-ra-el began A'-sa to reign over Ju'-dah.

10 And forty and one years reigned he in Je-ru'-sa-lem: and his mother's name was Ma'-a-cah the daughter of A-bish'-a-lom.

11 And A'-sa did that which was right in the eyes of Je-ho'-vah, as did David his father.

12 And he put away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made.

13 And also Ma'-a-cah his mother he removed from being queen, because she had made an abominable image for an A-she'-rah; and A'-sa cut down her image, and burnt it at the brook Kid'-ron.

14 But the high places were not taken away: nevertheless the heart of A'-sa was perfect with Je-ho'-vah all his days.

15 And he brought into the house of Je-ho'-vah the things that his father had dedicated, and the things that himself had dedicated, silver, and gold, and vessels.

1 Now it came to pass in the third year of Ho'-she'-a son of E'-lah king of Is'-ra-el, that Hez-e-ki'-ah the son of A'-haz king of Ju'-dah began to reign.

2 Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign; and he

Golden Text.—“There was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.” (1 Kings 12: 20.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Kings 23: 1-3.

reigned twenty and nine years in Je-ru'-sa-lem: and his mother's name was A'-bi the daughter of Zech-a-ri'-ah.

3 And he did that which was right in the eyes of Je-ho'-vah, according to all that David his father had done.

4 He removed the high places, and brake the pillars, and cut down the A-she'-rah: and he brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Mo'-ses had made; for unto those days the children of Is'-ra-el did burn incense to it; and he called it Ne-hush'-tan.

5 He trusted in Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el: so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Ju'-dah, nor among them that were before him.

6 For he clave to Je-ho'-vah; he departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which Je-ho'-vah commanded Mo'-ses.

7 And Je-ho'-vah was with him: whithersoever he went forth he prospered: and he rebelled against the king of As-syr'-i-a, and served him not.

Daily Bible Readings

October 17.	M.....	Judah's First King (1 Kings 14: 21-31)
October 18.	T.....	Righteousness in Judah (2 Chron. 13: 1-22)
October 19.	W.....	Royal Seed Almost Destroyed (2 Kings 11: 1-3)
October 20.	T.....	Athaliah Slain (2 Kings 11: 4-16)
October 21.	F.....	Asa's Religious Reforms (2 Chron. 15: 1-15)
October 22.	S.....	Judah Does Not Rely On God (2 Chron. 16: 1-10)
October 23.	S.....	Priests of Judah (2 Chron. 26: 16-23)

TIME.—For 1 Kings 12. 975 B.C.: for 1 Kings 15, 955-914 B.C.: for 2 Kings 18, 726-698 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Rehoboam, Asa, and Hezekiah.

Golden Text Explained

1. Why the statement of our text?

This statement presents somewhat of a difficulty. When Jehovah first mentioned the division of the kingdom of Solomon, he promised that he would not take away all the kingdom, but would give one tribe to Solomon's son. (1 Kings 11: 13.) Then when Ahijah told Jeroboam that the kingdom was to be divided, and ten tribes would be given to him, Ahijah stated that Solomon was to have one tribe for the sake of David and Jerusalem. (1 Kings 11: 32, 36.) However, the writer of Kings seems to have no trouble with the statement, for in the very next

verse he said, "And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, and the tribe of Benjamin, a hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men." (1 Kings 12: 21.) Two possible explanations have been given, (a) When Jehovah promised that one tribe was to be given, he had in mind Benjamin as being given to Judah, instead of saying that Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, was given one tribe, this explanation would say that Judah, the ruling tribe, was given one tribe to be associated with him. This explanation is not very satisfactory and is not held by many scholars, (b')

The tribe of Judah was so much larger and more powerful than Benjamin that it completely overshadowed the latter, and the two were usually spoken of as one. One man suggests that the term Judah in our text is to be taken in the same sense that it has when it is spoken of as the kingdom of Judah. However, this is not satisfactory, because the expression here is "the tribe of Judah," which about makes it impossible to think that it was used in the sense of the kingdom of Judah. Neither of these explanations is very satisfactory, but the latter is to be preferred.

2. What tied the ten tribes together?

Did all these tribes have something in common with each other which they did not have in common with Judah? We suggest the following: Ephraim was the strongest of the ten tribes, and many times the northern kingdom was called Ephraim. When Jacob was blessing the sons of Joseph, Joseph thought his father made a mistake, but Jacob insisted he knew what he was doing, and said that Ephraim would be greater than Banasseh, and that his seed should become a multitude of nations. (Gen. 48: 15-20.) Then when the Israelites came into the land of Canaan, and their allotment was made, Ephraim drew an inheritance in the very center of Canaan, and in the richest part of the country. A tabernacle was set up at Shiloh, which was in the territory of Ephraim, and there it remained for nearly three hundred years, during all the time of the judges (Judges 21:

19.) It was there in Shiloh where Samuel grew up and endeared himself to the people. Many of the judges were either from Ephraim or did much of their work in the borders of Ephraim. Gideon was reprimanded by the Ephraimites for not consulting with them in certain matters. (Judges 8: 1-3.) And when the rebellion of Absalom was put down, the men of Judah brought David back to Jerusalem. The men of Ephraim rebuked the tribe of Judah for doing that work alone. And Ephraim, a leader among Israel, said, "We have ten parts in the king, and we have also more right in David than ye: why then did ye despise us, that our advice should not be first had in bringing back our king?" (2 Sam. 19: 43.) Being situated centrally and being a large and pow-

erful tribe and having ambition to be a leader, the tribe of Ephraim welded the other nine tribes about her in such way as to form a kingdom early in the days of David.

3. What tied Judah and Benjamin together?

There was cause for dissension between Judah and Benjamin, and on occasions we see this dissension cropping out. Saul, the first king, was of the tribe of Benjamin, and there was war between Benjamin and Judah for several years after the death of Saul. Following the rebellion of Absalom, there was a base fellow by the name of Sheba, of the tribe of Benjamin, who said, "We have no portion in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse; every man to his tents, O Israel." (2 Sam. 20: 1.) But Sheba did not have sufficient following to draw many people after him, and he was soon slain and his rebellion put down. But the things which drew him together were, first that they had a common border and their people were thrown together much in their association. Next, the attitude which David held toward the house of Saul. Everybody knew that David loved Saul in spite of the fact that Saul did everything he could to kill David. And, furthermore, there was the love between David and Jonathan and David's oath to be kind to Jonathan's family, which he kept religiously. And last, Jerusalem was built on the border between Judah and Benjamin. It is said that the line between the two tribes passed through the very temple platform. The fact that the city of God, in which was situated the house of God, was much in the tribe of Benjamin as in the tribe of Judah very likely influenced the tribe of Benjamin to stay with Judah when the division came.

4. What part did Solomon's sins play in the division?

After telling of Solomon's sin of marrying so many women, many of them foreigners, and telling of his building of temples for these idolatrous wives, and taking part with them to some extent in their worship, it is said that Jehovah was angry with Solomon because Solomon's heart was turned away from the God of Israel and had not kept that which Jehovah commanded. Then we read, "Wherefore Jehovah said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee,

and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant." (1 Kings 11: 9-

11.) Then again we see the high tribute which Solomon levied on all the tribes, which alienated them from the tribe of Judah and the house of David.

Introduction

In spite of all of his wisdom, Solomon did one thing which played into the hands of the strong and jealous Ephraimites. While carrying on extensive building programs in Jerusalem and other places, he noticed a young man, described as "a might man of valor." This man turns out to be Jeroboam, an Ephraimite. When Solomon saw that this young man was industrious, he appointed him as overseer of all the labor of the house of Joseph. (1 Kings 11: 26-28.) The house of Joseph included the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. They were paying heavy taxes to Solomon and to his program of work. Not only were they paying taxes, but they had to furnish a certain number of men to work each month on these programs of construction. While they

built palaces for the king and princes of the tribe of Judah to live in, their jealousy was increased by the thought that none of their children should ever enjoy these places of comfort and luxury. And no doubt they resented the fact they were forced to work on these temples for the heathen gods worshiped by the foreign wives of Solomon. When Solomon appointed Jeroboam as overseer of these men, he gave Jeroboam an opportunity to organize them and to discuss with them the dissatisfaction that all of them felt and perhaps to lay plans for a future rebellion. This promotion of Jeroboam is undoubtedly the thing that gave him the opportunity to work himself into the place of leadership among the Ephraimites.

Exposition of the Text

I. Rehoboam Would Recover Rebellious Israel (1 Kings 12: 21-24)

And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem. In the paragraphs preceding our text we have the record of the division of the kingdom at Shechem. The men of Ephraim had called a meeting of all Israel and had put a proposition before Rehoboam to lighten their taxes. Rehoboam refused to do so, saying that if there was any change to be made, he would be more severe in treatment of them than his father was. Under the leadership of Jeroboam, who had returned from Egypt, the ten tribes had said, "What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David." (1 Kings 12:

16.) Following this, Rehoboam had sent Adoram, a man whose office made him very unpopular in Israel, to see what could be done to stop the rebellion. Israel had responded by stoning Adoram to death. As soon as this happened Rehoboam went back to Jerusalem.

He assembled all the house of Judah, and the tribe of Benjamin. From this we see, as was said in the treatment of the golden text, that Benja-

min went with Judah, thus making two tribes. In 2 Chron. 11: 13-17 we learn that the priests and the Levites that were in Israel resorted to Rehoboam, because Jeroboam and his sons cast them off that they should not execute the priests' office unto Jehovah. This gave Rehoboam three tribes instead of the one mentioned in our golden text. Then after this we learn that many of the people in all the ten tribes, "such as set their hearts to seek Jehovah, the God of Israel, came to Jerusalem to sacrifices unto Jehovah, the God of their fathers." Some have taken this to mean that they came only to the three annual feasts, but others think that those who were godly and resented the idolatry instituted by Jeroboam moved out of Israel into the territory of Judah. If this be true, Rehoboam had three full tribes and a considerable number of people from other tribes who set their heart on worshiping Jehovah instead of idols.

A hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men. This was a sizable army, yet according to David's census, there were five hundred thousand men at that time, and some eighteen years afterward, Abijah,

was able to raise an army of four thousand men. (2 Chron. 13: 3.)

To bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam. The purpose of raising this army of a hundred and eighty thousand chosen men was to do battle with Israel in order to quell the rebellion. Rehoboam planned to strike early before the men of Israel had time to perfect their organization and to raise an army to protect their government.

The word of God came unto Shemaiah the man of God. That Shemaiah was a man of influence may be seen from the fact that some years later, when Rehoboam forsook the law of Jehovah, so that the Lord allowed Egypt to come against him with people without number, it was Shemaiah that gathered the princes of Israel and influenced them to so humble themselves before Jehovah that the kingdom was spared. (2 Chron. 12: 1-12.)

Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren. This is the message which Jehovah gave Shemaiah to deliver to Rehoboam and to all the house of Judah and Benjamin. In this connection we notice that this lesson was to be delivered, not only to Judah and Benjamin, but "to the rest of the people." In verse 17 of this same chapter we are told that there were some of the children of Israel, that is of the ten tribes, that dwelt in cities of Judah and that Rehoboam reigned over these. Among them, no doubt, would be many of the tribe of Simeon, whose territory was all situated south of Judah. It is to be noticed that Jehovah still counts them all his brethren, and would have them recognize this fact and treat each other as such. It is very probable that Rehoboam with his hundred and eighty thousand chosen men of war could have subdued the men of Israel under Jeroboam. Many years after this they declared war on one another and waged long wars; one winning a battle now and the other later. The fact that God did not intervene and prevent these extended wars intimates that the reason he intervened here was the fact that Rehoboam was prepared for war while Jeroboam and his newly formed kingdom was not prepared.

For this thing is of me. This is Jehovah's statement, so we conclude that this division of the kingdom was

of Jehovah. It was in harmony with God's will. It is not God's will that men divide and fight with each other, but since the people had gone so far in sin under Solomon, it was God's will, as a consequence of these sins, that the nation be divided.

So they hearkened unto the word of Jehovah. It is to the credit of Rehoboam that he hearkened unto the word of Jehovah when it seems obvious that it was in his power to recover the rebelling tribes. No doubt the soldiers of Rehoboam received that word gladly. It is entirely possible that the people were not nearly so interested in keeping the kingdom together as Rehoboam was.

II. Asa's Righteous Reign (1 Kings 15: 9-15)

In the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel began Asa to reign over Judah. This statement helps us to see the relation between the king of Judah and the king of Israel. This also helps us to see that Asa's reign began just twenty years after the kingdom was divided.

Forty and one years reigned he in Jerusalem. Only two kings of Judah reigned longer than Asa. Uzziah, sometimes called Azariah, reigned fifty-two years, while Manasseh reigned fifty-five years. The reigns of the kings of Israel were much shorter. Only one man reigned as long as thirty years, and that was Jeroboam the second, who reigned forty-one years. The reign of Asa extended through the reigns of five kings of Israel: Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, and Omri.

Asa did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah. "Thus Asa's reign marks the return of Judah to a consciousness of the high destiny to which God had called her, and to the belief that the divine power was truly at work within her." (Smith's Dictionary.) Of practically all of the kings of Israel, it is said that they continued in sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. But with reference to the majority of the kings of Judah, it is said that they walked in the ways of David, their father, or did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah.

He put away the Sodomites out of the land. Sodomy is one of the unmentionable sins into which the Israelites fell. The law forbade the practice of it. (Deut. 23: 17.) This

is only a portion of the reforms of Asa, for we are told in this same verse that he "removed all the idols this his fathers had made." If the reader is interested in knowing more of Asa's reforms, he should read 2 Chron., chapters 14, 15, and 16.

And also Maacah his mother he removed from being queen. There is some question as to whether Maacah was the mother or the grandmother of Asa. In 1 Kings 15: 2 we read that Maacah, the daughter of Abishalom, was the mother of Abijam, who was the father of Asa. And in 2 Chron. 11: 20 we learn that Rehoboam took Maacah, the daughter of Absalom, as his wife, and loved her above all his wives and concubines. So it seems that there is little doubt that this woman is Asa's grandmother instead of his mother.

Because she had made an abominable image. The word Ashera is here used for an idol. And the authorized version says, "because she made an idol in a grove." This image was made of wood because Asa is said to have cut it down and burned it at the brook Kidron. Being the queen mother, she exerted a powerful influence in the court. But in spite of her age, her relationship to Asa, or her influence in the court, she was not able to continue this abominable practice of idolatry during the reign of Asa.

But the high places were not taken away. These high places were places of worship scattered about throughout the kingdom. Jehovah was never pleased with them, but as long as the worship was not abominable, the kings seemed not to interfere. Asa's son, Jehoshaphat, did not think it necessary to remove these places of worship as long as the people only sacrificed and burned incense there. (1 Kings 22: 43.)

The heart of Asa was perfect with Jehovah all his days. Some have criticized this statement as an unwarranted exaggeration, but we need not to take it as implying sinless perfection. In his latter days Asa made two grievous mistakes. In the first place he relied on the armies of other nations instead of relying on Jehovah. For this Jehovah told him that he had done foolishly, and that from henceforth he would have wars. And then in the last two years of his reign he suffered from a disease in his feet, and failed to rely on Je-

hovah as he should and put too much dependence in the physicians. (2 Chron. 16: 7-12.) These were mistakes of judgment, but they had nothing to do with his faithfulness to God, rather than going off after idols. And this statement of perfection is made in connection with his program of ridding Judah of idolatrous worship so his heart was perfect in that he always loved and revered Jehovah instead of being inclined to idolatry.

He brought into the house of Jehovah the things that his father had dedicated. What these dedicated things were we do not know, but some have suggested that they were the spoils of war between Abijah and Jeroboam (2 Chron. 13: 18) and of the war between Asa and the Ethiopians (2 Chron. 14: 15).

III. Hezekiah's Unparalleled Reign (2 Kings 18: 1-7)

Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah. We are told that Hezekiah came to the throne of Judah in the third year of the reign of Hoshea, king of Israel. Since Samaria fell in the ninth year of Hoshea's reign, Hezekiah came to the throne of Judah just six years before the captivity of Israel.

He did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah. Here again we find it being said of one of the kings of Judah that he did right in the eyes of Jehovah, "according to all that David his father had done." Hezekiah is said to have been one of the three most perfect kings of Judah. The need for good kings, men devoted to God, and to his way of worship, is seen in the fact that each of these men, who were right in the eyes of God, had quite a work of reformation to do.

He removed the high places. From this we learn that Hezekiah went one step further than Asa in his religious reform. As long as there was no idolatry connected with the high places, Asa and the other kings allowed them to go undisturbed, but Hezekiah destroyed even the high places.

And brake the pillars, and cut down the Asherah. This may be the explanation for Hezekiah's destruction of the high places themselves. From this statement we learn that the people had erected pillars and images which the people had put in these

high places for the purpose of idolatrous worship.

And he brake in pieces the brazen serpent. "Difficulties are raised with respect to this statement. Some argue that the serpent, having served its purpose, would have been left hanging at the place where it was set up in the wilderness; others, that Moses would have destroyed it, lest the Israelites should make it an idol; others, again, that it was not likely to have lasted seven hundred years from the Exodus, even if it was brought into Palestine and taken care of. It is supposed, therefore, that an imitation of the original serpent had been made by the Jews in the reign of Ahaz, had been called the serpent of Moses, and was now destroyed. But there is no sufficient reason for any of these suppositions." (Pulpit Commentary.)

For unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it. This statement does not say when the children of Israel began to burn incense to the brazen serpent. Certainly we know that they did not burn incense to it in the day of Moses, so this statement cannot mean from the days of Moses to the time of Hezekiah the people burned incense to it. It is also said that they called it Nehushtan. The meaning of this word is "a little brass thing," being

a diminutive term which expresses tenderness.

So that after him was none like him. So great was Hezekiah's trust in Jehovah and so faithful was he in his service to Jehovah that the statement is made that after him was no king like him, nor among them that were before him. From this statement we might conclude that Hezekiah was the best king that Judah ever had. But the same statement is made concerning Josiah. (2 Kings 23: 25.) And yet there is no contradiction between the two statements, because Hezekiah is said to be the greatest king so far as his trust in Jehovah is concerned, and Josiah is said to be the greatest king so far as his exact observance of the law is concerned. Someone has said that one of these kings excels in faith, while the other excels in his works.

For he clave to Jehovah. Having put his trust in Jehovah, he departed not from him but kept his commandments, which were given through Moses.

And Jehovah was with him. Since Jehovah was with him continually, he prospered in everything he attempted. He even rebelled against the king of Assyria and refused to serve him. For the details of Hezekiah's prosperity, the reader should read 2 Chron. 32: 27-30.

Relation to Our Aim

1. Persons to be remembered, (a) Rehoboam. We remember Rehoboam as the young, proud, headstrong ruler who refused to listen to the advice of aged counselors and lost the kingdom on account of it.

(b) Asa is to be remembered as the third king of Judah and the first one of those kings of whom it is said he walked right in the eyes of Jehovah according to David his father.

(c) Maacah, the grandmother of Asa, is to be remembered as a woman of power and influence in the court, but one who chose to use her influence in favor of impure idolatrous worship. (d) Hezekiah. This man is to be remembered as one of the two greatest kings of Judah, and one who was known especially for the thoroughness of his reform measures. He not only destroyed idols, but he destroyed the high places also. While Asa showed more love for God than

he did for his grandmother, Hezekiah showed more respect for God and God's law than he did for relics handed down from the days of Moses.

2. Lessons to be remembered, (a) Sin is no respecter of persons. Sin can find a place in the families of the very greatest reformers. And sin in the family of a reformer can embarrass him and hinder his work of reform. (b) Religious reforms do not last very long, for Josiah, another king of Judah, instituted an even greater reform than that of Hezekiah less than two generations later. (c) God was with Hezekiah in a way said of no other kings since the days of David. Though it is said of but very few kings that Jehovah was with them, this is a promise which Jehovah makes to all of his children today on condition that they love and obey him.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?
Repeat the golden text from memory.
Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

What prophet foretold the division of the kingdom?
Did the kingdom of Judah consist of one tribe only?
What explanation do you think best for the statement of our text?
What did Jacob predict with reference to Ephraim?
What do you know of Ephraim's advantageous location in Canaan?
What advantage would the early worship at Shiloh give the tribe of Ephraim?
How did the tribe of Ephraim show its strength in the days of David?
What cause was there for enmity between Judah and Benjamin?
What were some of the things which threw Judah and Benjamin together?
What part did Solomon's sins play in the division?

Introduction

What mistake did Solomon make which gave the tribe of Ephraim an advantage?
Of what tribes was the "house of Joseph" composed?
How did Solomon's work program increase the jealousy of Ephraim?
How did Jeroboam's promotion give him added opportunities to foment rebellion?

Rehoboam Would Recover

Rebellious Israel

Can you relate the events which caused Rehoboam to leave Shechem and return to Jerusalem?
Can you name the third tribe which associated itself with Judah?
What people among the ten tribes were sympathetic with the kingdom of Judah?
How large an army was Rehoboam able to assemble?
Through what prophet did Jehovah send a message to Rehoboam?
What was the message which the prophet gave Rehoboam?

What was the purpose assigned for sending the message?
What is the probable reason for God's intervention in this war?
In what sense can we say God willed this division?

Asa's Righteous Reign

How long had the nation been divided when Asa came to the throne of Judah?
How long did Asa reign in Judah?
What do you know of the comparative lengths of the reigns of the kings of Judah and of Israel?
What do you know of the comparative righteousness of the kings of Judah and the kings of Israel?
What do you know of reforms of Asa during his reign?
With what woman did Asa have trouble, and how did he handle the situation?
What was Asa's attitude toward the high places during his reign?
What is meant by Asa's heart being perfect with Jehovah all his days?

Hezekiah's Unparalleled Reign

Hezekiah came to the throne of Judah at what period of the life of the kingdom of Israel?
Was Hezekiah a good or an evil king?
What conditions in Judah emphasize the need of good kings?
What did Hezekiah do in his reform which Asa did not do in his reform?
What relic of the days of Moses was destroyed by Hezekiah?
Why was the brazen serpent destroyed by Hezekiah?
What is said of Hezekiah's greatness?
How could this statement also be made of Josiah?
What is said of the relationship between Hezekiah and Jehovah?

Relation To Our Aim

For what do we remember Rehoboam?
Why do we remember Asa?
What do you know of Maacah?
For what do we remember Hezekiah?
What is there of interest to you in lessons to be remembered?

Lesson V—October 30, 1955

THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY

Lesson Text

2 Kings 24: 10-17; 2 Chron. 36: 17-21

10 At that time the servants of Neb-u-chad-nez'-zar king of Bab'-y-lon came up to Je-ru'-sa-lem, and the city was besieged.

11 And Neb-u-chad-nez'-zar king of Bab'-y-lon came unto the city, while his servants were besieging it;

12 And Je-hoi'-a-chin the king of Ju'-dah went out to the king of Bab'-y-lon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers: and the king of Bab'-y-lon took him in the eighth year of his reign.

13 And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of Je-ho'-

vah, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold, which Sol'-o-mon king of Is'-ra-el had made in the temple of Je-ho'-vah, as Je-ho'-vah had said.

14 And he carried away all Je-ru'-sa-lem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valor, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths; none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land.

15 And he carried away Je-hoi'-δ-chin to Bab'-y-lon; and the king's mother, and the king's wives, and his

officers, and the chief men of the land, carried he into captivity from Je-ru'-sa-lem to Bab'-y-lon.

16 And all the men of might, even seven thousand, and the craftsmen and the smiths a thousand, all of them strong and apt for war, even them the king of Bab'-y-lon brought captive to Bab'-y-lon.

17 And the king of Bab'-y-lon made Mat-ta-ni'-ah, *Je-hoi'-a-chin's* father's brother, king in his stead, and changed his name to Zed-e-ki'-ah.

17 Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chal-de'-ans, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or virgin, old man or hoary-headed: he gave them all into his hand.

Golden Text.—“Ye have sinned against Jehovah: and be sure your sin will find you out” (Num. 32: 23.)

Devotional Reading.—Psalm 80: 1-7.

Daily Bible Readings

October 24.	M.....	Warning of Jeremiah (Jer. 26: 1-7)
October 25.	T.....	The Babylonian Crisis (Jer. 26: 8-16)
October 26.	W.....	Book of the Law Found (2 Kings 22: 8-20)
October 27.	T.....	Influence of the Book of the Law (2 Kings 23: 1-14)
October 28.	F.....	Repentance Too Late (2 Kings 23: 21-27)
October 29.	S.....	Sins Lord Would Not Overlook (2 Kings 24: 1-9)
October 30.	S.....	Sorrow of the Captives (Psalm 80: 1-7)

Time.—For Second Kings, 599 B.C.; for Second Chronicles, 586 B. C.

Place.—Jerusalem.

Persons.—Nebuchadnezzar and Jehoiachin and Zedekiah.

Golden Text Explained

1. The setting and teaching of the text. When the children of Israel came up the east side of the Jordan as far as the land of Jazer and Gilead, the tribes of Gad and Reuben saw that the land was good for raising cattle. They went to Moses with this proposition. “If we have found favor in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession; bring us not over the Jordan.” (Num. 32 5.) The first thought of Moses was that these men were tired of the campaign against the enemy, and that they wished to avoid the hardships of another campaign on the west side of Jordan. Moses feared that they were about to reenact the scenes of Kadesh-barnea, where the people heard the report about the spies and were afraid to try to enter Canaan. But the men of Reuben and Gad assured Moses that this was not their intention at all. They said they would build

18 And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of Je-ho'-vah, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes, all these he brought to Bab'-y-lon.

19 And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Je-ru'-sa-lem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof.

20 And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Bab'-y-lon; and they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Per'-si-a:

21 To fulfil the word of Je-ho'-vah by the mouth of Jer-e-mi'-ah, until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths: for as long as it lay desolate it kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.

sheepfolds for their cattle and cities for their little ones on the east side of Jordan, but that they themselves would go fully armed with the rest of the people and fight with them until they had been securely established on the west side of the Jordan. Then they would return to their families on the east side. To this proposition, Moses agreed, but gave them the warning that if they failed to do as they had agreed to do, it would be a sin against Jehovah, and reminded them that their sin would find them out. It is interesting to note that, in all these negotiations, only the tribes of Reuben and Gad were mentioned. And when Moses gave charge to Eleazar, the priest, to take account of this agreement when they determined the possession for each of the tribes, only Reuben and Gad were mentioned. But in verse 33 the half-tribe of Manasseh is mentioned

as receiving a portion on the east side of the Jordan. When and how this half-tribe of Manasseh got into the proposition is not known.

2. **All sin involves our relationship with God-** (a) Treatment of others. It is impossible for us to sin against other people without involving our relationship with God. This is true, first, because when we sin against our fellow man, we have violated a law of the Lord. Moses wanted these men of Reuben and Gad to understand that they could not mistreat their fellow tribesmen without sinning against God. He told them that, if they shirked their duties and responsibilities towards their fellow men in helping them to settle on the west side of Jordan, it would not only be a mistreatment of their fellow man, but that it would be a sin against Jehovah. This should cause us to refrain from sin. We might not care so much for doing our fellow man a wrong, but we will think more seriously about a sin against Jehovah. And since doing our fellow men a wrong is not only a sin against our fellow man, but also a sin against Jehovah, we will give the matter more consideration. Next, we are taught that when we sin against our brethren, we sin against Christ. (1 Cor. 8: 12.) Jesus taught that the neglect of the poor is also a neglect of himself. (Matt. 25: 45.) (b) Violation of the first three of the ten commandments. The ten commandments are divided into the two tables; one dealing with our treatment of our fellow man, and the other our attitude toward God himself. Worshiping many gods, using images in our worship, and taking the name of God in vain are covered by these first three commandments. Then along with these might be included all forms of impiety and irreverence, and all such desires and passions and motives as are impure and unholy. There is no possibility of committing a sin, whether against God himself or against our fellow man, without involving our relationship with God. There is but one way to maintain a proper relationship with God, and that is to refrain from sin, and if

through weakness, or ignorance, we do commit a sin, we must repent and seek forgiveness of that sin, in order that we may maintain the proper relationship with God.

2. **Your sins will find you out.** Every criminal tries to make his crime the perfect crime; one which cannot be detected and punished. Perhaps some have succeeded so far as the officers of the law are concerned, but there is no such thing as a perfect crime against God. "For God will bring work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." (Eccles. 12: 14.) Again, "For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Cor. 5: 10.) (a) As an example of sin finding out the man who committed it, we have Achan, a soldier in the army of Israel at the time of the fall of Jericho. (Josh.

6, 7.) Achan stole some devoted things from the city and hid them in his tent. He thought no one would ever know that he had stolen that which was devoted to God. But when Israel failed to take the city of Ai, his sin was found out, and he was stoned to death, (b) David learned that sin will find you out. (2 Sam.

11, 12.) David deceived and murdered Uriah to keep his sin with Bathsheba from coming to light. But in spite of his efforts to keep the sin hidden, Nathan, the prophet of God, revealed it, rebuked David, and brought him to repentance. That was one of the greatest blessings that ever came to David, for had he succeeded in hiding that sin, he might never have repented and secured forgiveness of God. There is a beatitude in Rev. 14: 13 which reads, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord . . . that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them." Someone has formed a corresponding curse that reads as follows, "Cursed are the dead who die in their sins; for they have no rest from their transgressions, but their guilt follows them."

Introduction

"A singular gauge of the growth of the kingdom of Judah was supplied by the progressive augmentation of the army under successive

kings. In David's time the warriors of Judah numbered at least five hundred thousand. But Rehoboam brought into the field only one hun-

dred and eighty thousand men. Abijah, eighteen years afterwards, four hundred thousand. (2 Chron. 13: 3.) Asa (2 Chron. 14: 3), his successor, five hundred and eighty thousand, exactly equal to the sum of the armies of his two predecessors. Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 17: 14-19), the next king, numbered his warriors in five armies, the aggregate of which is one million one hundred and sixty thousand, exactly double the army of his father, and exactly equal to the sum of the armies of his three predecessors. After four inglorious reigns, the energetic Amaziah could muster only three hundred thousand men when he set out to recover Edom. His son, Uzziah, had a standing (2 Chron. 26: 11) force of three hundred seven thousand and five hundred fighting men....

"The kingdom of Judah possessed many advantages which secured for it a longer continuance than that of Israel. A frontier less exposed to

powerful enemies, a soil less fertile a population heartier and more united, a fixed and venerated center of administration and religion, and hereditary aristocracy in the sacerdotal cast, an army always subordinate, a succession of kings which no revolution interrupted, many of whom were wise and good, and strove successfully to promote the moral and spiritual, as well as the material prosperity of their people; still more than these, the devotion of the people to one true God, which, if not always a pure and elevated sentiment, was yet a contrast to such devotion as could be inspired by the worship of the calves or of Baal; and lastly the popular reverence for and obedience to the divine law so far as they learned it from their teachers: to these and other secondary causes is to be attributed the fact that Judah survived her more populous and more powerful sister kingdom by one hundred and thirty-five years; and lasted from 975 B. C. to 586 B. C.' (Smith's Bible Dictionary.)

Exposition of the Text

I. The King Surrenders to Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24: 10-12)

At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar. In our last lesson we found that there were three primary raids made by the Assyrians on the kingdom of Israel to take the people into Assyrian captivity. These raids extended over a period of fifty years. We shall find that there were three distinct primary raids made by the Babylonians on Jerusalem to take the kingdom of Judah into captivity. However, these raids consumed less than half the time that the Assyrians consumed in taking Israel into captivity. The first raid was in 606 B. C. Jehoikim was then the king of Judah. Nebuchadnezzar was then in charge of the army, but only as a representative of his father, who was the king of Babylon. It was at this time that Daniel and his friends were carried into Babylonian captivity, and the record of this raid is found in Daniel 1: 1-7. Only a small part of the vessels of the temple were carried away at this time, and a small number of captives were taken, among whom were several of the royal seed and the noble who were "well-favored, and skilful in all wisdom, and endued with knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability to stand in the king's

palace; and that ye should teach them the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans." The second raid which Babylon made on Judah is the one of which we study in this section of our lesson. It was made in 599 B. C., while Jehoiachin was king. The third raid was made in 588 B. C. and was completed with the overthrow of Jerusalem in 586 B. C.

And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came unto the city. Nebuchadnezzar was the son of Nabopolassar, who was the founder of the Babylonian empire. In 625 B. C., after a reign of twenty-one years, Nabopolassar died, while his son Nebuchadnezzar was on a military campaign in the west, including Palestine and Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar, on hearing of his father's death, left Egypt and went hurriedly back to Babylon to claim the throne.

While his servants were besieging it. Nebuchadnezzar was not with the army when it first attacked Jerusalem. He had been conducting a siege against Tyre, and leaving enough of his force to hold Tyre in siege, he brought the rest of the force to aid his generals in the fight against Jerusalem.

Jehoiachin the King of Judah went out to the king of Babylon. Realizing the futility of any further fight

at this time, and thinking that a surrender of the king might save the surrender of the city, the king and his mother and servants, and princes and officers, went out to surrender to Nebuchadnezzar. From Jeremiah we learn that there were false prophets in Jerusalem, who were making strong efforts to deceive the king. Jeremiah warned him against following these false prophets and warned him of the consequences if he should do so. (Jer. 29.) And from what Josephus says about these matters, some have concluded that the king's mother, Nehushta (2 Kings 24: 8), was a leading influence to get Jehoiachin to go contrary to the wishes of Nebuchadnezzar.

II. Nebuchadnezzar Plunders The City (2 Kings 24: 13-17)

He carried out thence all the treasures of the house of Jehovah. If Jehoiachin thought that the surrender of himself and several leaders of the nation would satisfy Nebuchadnezzar, and keep him from plundering the city, he was disappointed. Though our text uses the word "all" referring to the treasures of the king's house and the vessels which Solomon made for the temple, we need not construe the word in its unlimited sense. For in 2 Chron. 25: 13-17 we find another list of things which were carried away in a subsequent and final siege of the city. Some of the vessels made by Solomon for use in the temple were carried away in the first raid, as we learn from Daniel, and were used in the drunken feasts of Belshazzar. (Dan. 5.) In these experiences we learn how sin can cause those things which are made for use in holy purposes to be prostituted to low, base, and vulgar purposes. Sin not only does that for such things as these vessels used in the temple, but sin can so wreck and ruin the life of an individual that it will no longer be fit to be used for holy purposes, and is no longer fit to be used for anything except in the accomplishment of the devil's purposes.

He carried away all Jerusalem. In this verse the word "all" is limited by the last phrase, "save the poorest sort of the people of the land." There were ten thousand of the leading men, soldiers, craftsmen, and smiths carried away at this time. In Jer. 52: 28-30 we have some different figures. Jeremiah names three

different raids made by the Babylonians and gives the total number of the three raids as four thousand and six hundred. It is probable, however, that Jeremiah intended to list only certain minor raids which are not mentioned in the book of Kings. Nebuchadnezzar intended to take away enough of the soldiers, the wealthy men, and the leading craftsmen to render the nation so weak that it would be unable to resist any further.

All the men of might, even seven thousand, and the craftsmen and the smiths a thousand. In this verse we are told that there were seven thousand soldiers and one thousand craftsmen and smiths included in the total number of ten thousand. This would leave two thousand as the number of the princes or upper class of people. What portion of the population of the city this would be we have no way of knowing. The highest estimates of the city's population at that time run from seventeen to twenty thousand, but of course this is merely a guess, and it is probable that many people from the villages and surrounding territory rushed into the city as the Babylonians approached, so that the population of the city in the time of the siege may have been double that of ordinary times.

All of them strong and apt for war. This indicates the basis on which Nebuchadnezzar made his first choice of those to take with him to Babylon. He was interested only in leaving Jerusalem in such a condition that it would not be necessary for him to return to quell another rebellion. If a man was too poor to make any financial contributions toward a rebellion or if he was not skilled in any trade which would enable him to make arms to be used in a rebellion, he was left in the land. But if he had any ability to make any contribution whatsoever to a rebellion, he was taken to Babylon.

The king of Babylon made Mattaniah . . . king in his stead. The name of Mattaniah was changed to that of Zedekiah. "Zedekiah was but twenty-one years old when he was thus placed in charge of an impoverished kingdom, and a city which, though still strong in its natural and artificial impregnability, was bereft of well nigh all its defenders. But Jerusalem might have remained the head of the Babylonian province of Judah, and the temple of

Jehovah continued standing, had Zedekiah possessed wisdom and firmness enough to remain true to his allegiance to Babylon . . . It is evident that Zedekiah was a man not so much bad at heart as weak in will. He was one of those unfortunate characters, frequent in history, . . . who find themselves at the head of affairs during a great crisis, without having the strength of character to enable them to do what they know to be right, and whose infirmity becomes moral guilt. The princes of his court, as he himself pathetically admits in his interview with Jeremiah, had him completely under their influence. . . . he was thus driven to disregard the counsels of the prophet, which, as the event proved, were perfectly sound; and he who might have kept the fragments of the kingdom of Judah together and maintained for some generations longer the worship of Jehovah, brought its final ruin on his country, destruction on the temple, death to his family, and a cruel torment and miserable captivity on himself." (Smith's Bible Dictionary.)

III. Final Capture And Destruction Of Jerusalem (2 Chron. 36: 17-21)

Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldeans. We are told that Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem, and did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. We are told that Jeremiah the prophet worked with Zedekiah in an effort to save the city and the temple, but that Zedekiah "stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart against turning unto Jehovah." The leading men of the city were bringing all the influence they had to cause Zedekiah to rebel against Nebuchadnezzar. The false prophets of the city joined with these men of wealth and influence and predicted a restoration of the things taken from Jerusalem in former raids within a very short time. Jeremiah told Zedekiah that, if he would not rebel, the country would continue as a province of Babylon, and that they would be free to continue their worship as they pleased. And even after the rebellion had started, and the city was under siege, Jeremiah persuaded Zedekiah to surrender himself in order to save the city. But Zedekiah was so completely dominated by the leading men of the

city and by these false prophets that he could not find the courage to stand out against them. So he allowed the siege to continue until the city was captured.

Who slew their young men with the sword. Nebuchadnezzar is characterized as one who had no compassion on man, woman, or child.

And all the vessels of the house of God. The city was plundered methodically at this time that they might get everything that had any value. Not only were the vessels of the house of God taken, but also the treasures of the temple and of the king, and all his princes.

And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem. One source has this to say about the final days of the siege. "But the besieged were not behind in their resources of defense. Houses were demolished, that new walls might be built of their material, inside each spot weakened by the battering rams. The ramparts were vigorously defended by archers and slingers, equal in bravery to those of the Chaldeans. The rams were caught, when possible, by double chains or ropes, to weaken their blows, or, if it might be, to capsize them. Lighted torches and fire brands were thrown on their roofs, and on those of catapults, to set them on fire. The gates of the town were zealously defended against the efforts of the enemy to burst them open, or to burn them. Nothing, however, could prevent the final catastrophe. Famine within the walls aided the besiegers without, and it was speedily followed, as is always the case, with an outbreak of pestilence. Food was well nigh gone. There had long been no bread. Mothers were, at last driven to murder and then eat their children. The richest citizens wandered about searching for scraps in the refuse. Effeminate nobles, whose fairness and personal beauty had been their pride, were reduced to black-faced ghosts by hunger. To make matters worse, feuds broke out within the city. Some were for surrender, others were holding out to the last, and every street became a battlefield." (Geikie.)

Until the reign of the kingdom of Persia. In this verse we are told that Nebuchadnezzar carried the people of Jerusalem away to Babylon and made them his servants un-

til the time of the kingdom of Persia. This refers to the time when King Cyrus of Persia made a proclamation, which gave the Jews the liberty to return to Jerusalem.

To fulfil the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah. In a series of prophecies Jeremiah had said that the nation which would not serve Babylon would be punished by the Lord with sword and famine and pestilence until it was consumed. (Jer. 27: 7-9.)

Until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths. The Lord demanded that the people not work their land one year

in seven, giving it a rest or a sabbath. The implication here is that the people had not obeyed this law, and so while they were away in captivity, the land would enjoy the sabbaths which it should have been enjoying all the way along. Our text says that this captivity was to continue for "threescore and ten years." This captivity must be dated from the first raid which Nebuchadnezzar made on Judah 606 B. C. Seventy years would carry it down to 536 B. C., which is the year in which Cyrus allowed the first group to return to Jerusalem.

Relation to Our Aim

1. Persons to be remembered, (a) Nebuchadnezzar is to be remembered as the second, and perhaps the greatest, king of the Babylonian empire. Though a wicked man, he was used as an instrument in the hands of God to punish sin in God's people, (b) Zedekiah. This man is to be remembered as the last king in the kingdom of Judah. He was weak and subservient to the influential men of the city. When a breach was finally made in the walls of the city, he sought safety in flight by night, but was overtaken at Jericho and taken into captivity.

2. Facts to be remembered, (a) Jerusalem was given every opportunity to save herself from destruction, but these opportunities were not used. Selfishness and a lack of trust in God's prophets caused the leaders of the city to continue their defense until the city was destroyed, (b) There were false prophets in Jerusalem who served their own inter-

ests and enjoyed a place of prominence and influence for a few days, though they paid for it later with their lives.

3. Lessons to be remembered (a) The sins of supposed friends of the temple subjected that magnificent building to shame and destruction it is easy for the supposed friends of the church, those whose names are on the church roll, to embarrass and disgrace the church in the community where they live. (b) Jeremiah was an unpopular prophet in Jerusalem in his time, because he insisted on telling the people the truth. But then, as it often is, truth was not pleasant, and the people preferred to hear the words of false prophets rather than listen to unpleasant truth, (c) The fulfillments of Jeremiah's prophecies furnish us with evidence that God reveals his truth through men, as well as evidence of the inspiration of the Bible

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

What request did the tribes of Gad and Reuben make of Moses?

What was the first reaction of Moses to their proposition?

What promise did Reuben and Gad make to Moses?

What other tribe was finally associated with these two in settling east of the Jordan?

Why is a sin against our fellow man a sin against God?

How is our relationship to God involved in violating the first three of the ten commandments?

Why can there be no such thing as a perfect crime against God?

Can you show how the sin of Achan illustrates our text?

Can you show how the sin of David illustrates our text?

Introduction

By what may we measure the growth of the kingdom of Judah?

What are some of the advantages which Judah possessed?

What can be said of religion in the kingdom of Judah?

How many years did Judah outlast Israel?

The King Surrenders to Nebuchadnezzar

By what nation was Israel taken into captivity?

By what nation was Judah taken into captivity?

Can you give the dates of the three rams made by Babylon on the kingdom of Judah?

When did Nebuchadnezzar come to the throne of Babylon?

What did the king of Judah do to try save Jerusalem?

According to Jeremiah what evil influence was having its effect on the king-

Nebuchadnezzar Plunders the City

- Did the king's surrender save the plundering of the city?
- What did Nebuchadnezzar take from the temple?
- What use was made of these vessels in Babylon?
- How many people did Nebuchadnezzar carry away from Jerusalem?
- What type of people were carried away in this raid?
- What type of people were left in Jerusalem?
- Whom did Nebuchadnezzar leave on the throne of Judah?
- What is said of the character and ability of Zedekiah as a ruler?

Final Capture and Destruction of Jerusalem

- What influences in Jerusalem were moving Zedekiah to rebel against Babylon?

- What one man was advising Zedekiah to be faithful to Babylon?
- What is said of Nebuchadnezzar's treatment of the people of Jerusalem?
- What do you know of the conduct of the battle for the city?
- What is said of the condition of the people in Jerusalem before the final fall of the city?
- What prophet had foretold the captivity of Judah?
- What would the land enjoy while the people were in captivity?
- Can you give the dates for the beginning and the end of the captivity?

Relation To Our Aim

- For what is Nebuchadnezzar to be remembered?
- For what do we remember Zedekiah?
- What facts are to be remembered?
- What is there of interest to you in lessons to be remembered?

Lesson VI—November 6, 1955

EZEKIEL ENCOURAGES THE PEOPLE

Lesson Text

Ezek. 34: 11-16, 25, 26

11 For thus saith the Lord Je-ho'-vah: Behold, I myself, even I, will search for my sheep, and will seek them out.

12 As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will deliver them out of all places whither they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.

13 And I will bring them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them upon the mountains of Is'-ra-el, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited places of the country.

14 I will feed them with good pasture; and upon the mountains of the height of Is'-ra-el shall their fold be: there shall they lie down in a good fold: and on fat pasture shall they

feed upon the mountains of Is'-ra-el.

15 I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord Je-ho'-vah.

16 I will seek that which was lost, and will bring back that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but the fat and the strong I will destroy; I will feed them in justice.

25 And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause evil beasts to cease out of the land; and they shall dwell securely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.

26 And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in its season; there shall be showers of blessing.

Golden Text.—"So thou, son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel" (Ezek. 33: 7.)

Devotional Reading.—Psalms 137: 1-6.

Daily Bible Readings

October	31. M.	People Charged with Their Sins (Ezek. 16: 1-22)
November	1. T.	False Shepherds (Ezek. 34: 11-16)
November	2. W.	Blessings Promised (Ezek. 34: 23-31)
November	3. T.	Watchman on the Walls (Jer. 33: 7-16)
November	4. F.	The Good Shepherd (John 10: 11-16)
November	5. S.	Zedekiah's Chance to Save the People (Jer. 38: 14-28)
November	6. S.	God Uses Babylon (Ezek. 21: 1-23)

Time.—587 B.C.

Place.—Babylonia, in the vicinity of the Chebar River.

Persons.—Jehovah, Ezekiel, and the children of Israel.

Golden Text Explained

i. **Duty and responsibility of a watchman.** Our text is taken from a military scene. A watchman is placed at some vantage point, as a hill or the wall of a city, to watch for the safety and security of the people of the city. If the watchman sees the enemy coming and warns the people, and they do not heed the warning, the watchman is not responsible. But if the watchman sees the enemy coming and does not sound the warning, then the blood of the people will be upon his hands. Or if the watchman fails in his duty, goes to sleep at his post, and the enemy comes, the watchman is still responsible for the people under his care. But we are interested only in the spiritual application of our text, (a) The watchman has a duty and responsibility toward God. Our text represents God as setting the watchman to watch for the safety of Israel. So those who watch for souls today are not in that position by their own authority, but because they have been placed there by the Lord, (b) The watchman has a duty and responsibility to man. When an army or a city put a watchman at a vantage point, they placed themselves in the care of that watchman. They trusted him with their lives. When the watchman accepted that place of responsibility, and took upon himself the performance of that duty, he took the lives of the people in his hands. If he had any sense of responsibility at all, he realized that he was responsible for the lives of all who were in the city. And this feeling of responsibility to his fellow man would cause him to keep awake and be alert at the post of duty. So men today who are in positions of spiritual responsibility should feel heavily and keenly the fact that they have been entrusted with the eternal welfare of the souls whom they serve, (c) A word about the extent of the watchman's responsibility will be in place here. It was the business of the watchman to tell the sleeping city or army of the approach of danger. It was not the business of the watchman to pick each one of them up and carry them to a place of safety. It was not the business of the watchman to force the people whom he served to flee from the danger he saw. So spiritual watchmen on the walls of Zion now should realize that it is their duty to teach

and warn people, but it is not their duty to be God's policemen. They can teach people what to do and how to live, but it is not their duty nor is it within their power to force people to live in harmony with their teaching.

2. Requirements of watchmen, (a)

The first requirement of a watchman was that he be loyal to his superiors, and so the first requirement of a spiritual watchman on the walls of Zion today is that he be loyal to God, who gave him the duty of watching for the souls of others. A deep sense of loyalty to God should characterize every preacher, elder, and teacher of God's word. A sense of loyalty to God should be superior even to his desire to make men happy, and certainly superior to his desire to be popular with those whom he serves, (b) A second requirement of the watchman was that he be faithful to his duty. His superior appointed him to perform a duty. If he has no sense of obligation, or of faithfulness to his duties, he will not make a good watchman. So when we are appointed today to perform the service of a spiritual watchman, we must have or develop a sense of faithfulness to our duty. It is necessary for us to cultivate such a determination to be faithful to duty that we will not allow our **own pleasure, comfort or personal interests** of any kind to keep us from the performance of our duties, (c) In order for a man to make a good watchman, he not only needs a sense of loyalty to his superiors and of faithfulness to his duty, but he must have a personal interest in the **welfare of others**. So the spiritual watchman who is not deeply concerned about the welfare of others will not make a good watchman. It was this desire to help others that caused our Lord to leave the glory world and come to this world to suffer and die. Unless we can develop this personal interest in the happiness and the welfare of others, we will be lacking in one of the essential characteristics of a watchman, (d) There was an element of suffering in the work of the watchman of a city or an army. He had to do his work while others slept and rested. So there is an element of suffering in spiritual **watchmen today**. A lot more of study and meditation must be put into his work than is required of

the average person. And a lot of times his work is not appreciated. Sometimes he becomes very unpopular because he does his work well. And actual persecution must sometimes be suffered in order that he may perform his duties to God. Paul and other New Testament preachers were often persecuted because they did well their work as watchmen.

3. **Each one is his brothers' keeper.** There is a sense in which all of us are watchmen because each one of us is his brothers' keeper. And yet there is a sense in which preachers are watchmen and have duties and responsibilities which are not common to every member of the church. Elders are said to watch for the souls under their care as those that expect to give account in the day of

judgment. (Heb. 13: 17.) Every person who accepts the responsibility of teaching a class under the oversight of the elders agrees to become a watchman for the souls of those whom he teaches. In this respect and to this degree, he has duties and responsibilities which are peculiar to his place of service, and is not binding upon every individual of the church. If those who serve in these special capacities do not feel a sense of loyalty to God, a sense of faithfulness to duty, if they do not feel a deep abiding interest in the welfare of others, and are not willing to suffer in order that they may discharge their duties, they should ask to be relieved of the responsibility of being a watchman for souls.

Introduction

Ezekiel was the son of Buzi, who was a priest. (Ezek. 1: 1-3.) He was taken captive in the reign of Jehoiachin and at the time this king was taken. He lived with that group of captives who were on the Chebar River. Just where that is has been hard for scholars to determine, though it is likely the royal canal connecting the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in southern Babylonia. Ezekiel did his work in captivity in an effort to encourage the captives to accept the situation and make the best of it and look for a return in God's good time. He and Jeremiah did their work at the same time, but Jeremiah stayed in Jerusalem. It is thought by some that there was some connection between the two prophets. The Rabbins even thought Ezekiel was the son of Jeremiah but had no good reasons to think so. Ezekiel is more direct, blunt, and unsparing in his approach than Jeremiah. He pointed out the sins of Jerusalem, saying that she was worse than Sodom and Samaria.

He spoke of false prophets in Judah of the ungodly princes and unfaithful priests, and of the consequence of their sins. But for the comfort and encouragement of the captives Ezekiel gave them his vision of the valley of the dry bones, which came to life and told that the people of Israel would be called from their captivity and be allowed to live in their own land again. He saw the temple restored and the temple rebuilt, and the land inhabited and productive. He saw the Sabbath observed as it should be. He saw the various offerings being offered to God in the right way. He saw the Lord pleased to receive them. All this teaching was calculated to make the people more contented with their lot in the strange land, to keep them from rebelling against their rulers and their taskmasters. Had Ezekiel not exercised such influence over the people, it is possible that their rebellious spirits would have caused their enemies to exterminate them.

Exposition of the Text

I. Jehovah Seeking: His Sheep (Ezek. 34: 11-13)

Behold, I myself, even I, will search for my sheep. In the first six verses of the chapter from which our text is taken Jehovah indicts the shepherds for their lack of concern for the welfare of their sheep. First he said the shepherds feed themselves and not the sheep. Next he said you kill the fatlings that you may eat the meat and clothe yourselves but do not care for the sheep. The dis-

eased have not been healed, and those who are broken and maimed have not been bound up. Next he charges them that, with force and rigor, they had ruled over the sheep. As a consequence of this, the sheep were scattered, and there were no shepherds who cared enough for them to gather them back. Then in verses 7 to 10 preceding our text Jehovah pronounces judgment upon these faithless shepherds. He said, "Behold I am against the shepherds: and

I will require my sheep at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the sheep; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; and I will deliver my sheep from their mouth, that they may not be food for them." Now our text begins with the statement that Jehovah will be the shepherd of his own sheep. It was because of the failure of those shepherds, in whose care Jehovah had committed his sheep, that Jehovah would expel them and take over the work himself. He begins by saying that he would do that which the shepherds had not done. They had not searched for the sheep which had gone astray or scattered by the force and rigor by which they ruled, but Jehovah would search for them and bring them back.

So will I seek out my sheep. This undoubtedly points to the time of the Messiah, when the priesthood would no longer be in the tribe of Levi, but would be transferred to the tribe of Judah and in the person of God himself in flesh, Jesus Christ, the high priest, after the order of Melchizedek. Jesus said he came to seek and to save that which was lost. (Luke 14: 10.) And Jesus represents himself as the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. (John 10: 11.) Again Jesus pictures the good shepherd as leaving the ninety and nine in the wilderness that he may go and search for that which was lost. (Luke 15: 3-7.) Often we are told of man seeking after God, but here we have the picture of God seeking after man.

I will bring them out from the peoples. It should be remembered that Ezekiel was a captive in Babylonia, and that he served as God's mouthpiece to the captives in that land. It was Ezekiel's work to keep the people comforted and courageous in spite of the humiliation and the suffering which their bondage brought upon them. He often reminded them that God had not forgotten them, that they would not be forever in captivity, and that God had promised to bring them back into their own country. And so in this verse he tells them that Jehovah will be their shepherd, and, as the shepherd brings back the wandering sheep, so Jehovah will bring his people out from those countries into which they had been scattered, and that he would bring them into their own land.

I will feed them upon the moun-

tains of Israel. This is a continuation of his encouragement to the people to look forward to the time when Jehovah, as the shepherd of his sheep, will bring them from those countries into which they were taken captives and allow them to feed upon the mountains of Israel and by the water courses in all the inhabited places of their own country. There are some who will look forward to the time, in fulfillment of this and other scriptures, God will gather the Jews back to Palestine. But these prophecies concern the return of the Jews to the land of Palestine that were either fulfilled in the literal return of the Jews to Babylonian captivity in the fifth and sixth centuries before Christ, or as a spiritual fulfillment in God's dealings with spiritual Israel in the church. That this chapter in Ezekiel, from which our text is taken, does go beyond the return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity to the times of the Messiah is evident from verses 23 and 24, which read, "And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I, Jehovah, will be their God, and my servant David prince among them; I, Jehovah, have spoken it." The time of the setting up of one fold and one shepherd over the sheep is determined by what Jesus said in John 10: 11-16. There it is evident that the church is the one fold and Jesus is the one shepherd over the church. Yet Ezekiel said that David would be the shepherd. It is obvious, therefore, that the term David, in Ezekiel's prophecy, refers to Christ.

II. Jehovah Caring for His Sheep

(Ezek. 34: 14-16)

I will feed them with good pasture. With the psalmist David, the humblest child of God on earth today can say, "Jehovah is my shepherd. I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside still waters." (Psalm 23: 1, 2.) Whereas the appointed shepherds in Israel had proved themselves hirelings with no concern for the welfare of the sheep, and had not been careful to lead them into good pastures, Jehovah says that he will feed *his* sheep in good pastures. Jeremiah speaks comfortingly along the same line when he says, "For Jehovah hath ransomed Jacob, and redeemed him from the hand of him that was

stronger than he. And they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow unto the goodness of Jehovah, to the grain, and to the new wine, and to the oil, and to the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all." (Jer. 31: 11, 12.)

Upon the mountains of the height of Israel shall their fold be. Here we have mention of the fold being on the mountains of Israel. And in verse 13 God said he would feed them upon the mountains of Israel. Those who contend for a future return of Jews to Palestine say that these verses must have a literal fulfillment; that the Jews must literally be brought back into Palestine. First, let it be said that this prophecy was written before the return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity, and in that return these verses were literally fulfilled. Second, let it be remembered that in this same condition, only a few verses below, mention is made of the mountains of Israel. It is said that David shall be their shepherd. (Verse 23.) Do those who contend for a future literal return of the Jews to the mountains of Israel also contend for a resurrection of David, that he may be their shepherd? If we contend for a future return of Israel to the literal mountains of Israel, then we must also contend for the resurrection of David and his office as shepherd of God's people here on earth.

I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep. We should remember that these are the words of Jehovah. Yet Jesus says that he is the shepherd of the sheep. This simply identifies Jesus as Jehovah or one member of the godhead. Jesus was God, Jehovah, manifest in the flesh. Paul referred to Jesus as "God blessed for ever." (Rom. 9: 5.) The writer of Hebrews took prophecies in the Old Testament concerning Jehovah and applied them in the New Testament to Jesus. (Heb. 1: 5-13.) And the apostle John said that Jesus Christ "is the true God, and eternal life." (1 John 5: 20.) So we need not be alarmed when we see Jesus claiming to be that shepherd which Jehovah, in the Old Testament, said he would be.

I will cause them to lie down. Jehovah now promises to do for his sheep all the things which these hireling shepherds had failed to do. Where they had left them exposed and unprotected, Jehovah says that

he will cause them to lie down. This is a scene of peace and safety.

I will seek that which was lost. Whereas the hireling shepherds were not concerned with those that wandered away, did not take the trouble to search for them, Jehovah says he will seek for all those who are lost and will bring them back that have been driven away. Next, whereas the unfaithful shepherds did not bind up that which was broken and maimed, Jehovah says that he will take care of those whose limbs are broken or have been torn by wild beasts. And those who are sick will receive the needed attention.

But the fat and the strong I will destroy. Adam Clarke says in his commentary that this verse refer? back to the shepherds who grew fat and strong off of the sheep. But this is out of harmony with the context Jehovah had already, in verses 1 to

10, indicted these unfaithful shepherds and pronounced their condemnation. Having dismissed that part of the subject; he would not likely return to it in one single phrase of a verse. And from that which follows we see that he is not talking about the hireling shepherds, out about the sheep which have been favored by these shepherds and have been allowed to grow fat and strong at the expense of the weak and the sick. In the next few verses we read, "Behold. I judge between sheep and sheep, the rams and the he-goats. Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have fed upon the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pasture? and to have drunk of the clear waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet? And as for my sheep, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet, and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet. Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah unto them: behold. I, even I, will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. Because ye thrust with side and with shoulder, and push all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad; therefore will I have my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep." (Verses 17-22.)

III. The Covenant of Peace and Its Blessings (Ezek. 34: 25, 26)

And I will make with them a covenant of peace. There can hardly be any doubt that Ezekiel refers to the

new covenant made by Jesus Christ. He had just said that he would make David their shepherd, and we have found that he referred to Christ, who is the seed of David. The idea of David ruling over them under this new covenant is brought even more closely together with the idea of the covenant in another statement of Ezekiel. "And my servant David shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd . . . and David my servant shall be their prince for ever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (Ezek. 37: 24-27.) Jeremiah speaks of a new covenant which was to be made with the people of God (Jer. 31: 31-34), which is quoted by the writer of Hebrews and is said to be the covenant made by Jesus Christ and the one of which he is the mediator. (Heb. 8.) Since Ezekiel and Jeremiah lived at the same time, one working with the captives in Babylonia and the other with the Jews in Jerusalem, it follows that the covenant which Jeremiah promised must be the same covenant which Ezekiel promised, otherwise there would be two covenants promised. Since God promised only one new covenant with his people, and the covenant mentioned by Jeremiah is specifically mentioned and said to be the covenant made by Jesus Christ, it follows that this covenant promised by Ezekiel is that same covenant under which God is our God and we are his people.

Will cause evil beasts to cease out of the land. Here again we are forced to give some terms a figurative meaning. In this verse evil beasts simply

mean all those tilings which would harm or hinder the peace and happiness of God's people.

Shall dwell securely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. Certainly the prophet did not mean that there would come a time when the people of Israel would desert their houses and would live like beasts in the woods. Many prophecy mongers of today contend for a literal interpretation of all these prophecies. They contend that, when God says he will bring his people back to the mountains of Israel, it cannot mean anything other than simply a literal return to live on the mountains of Israel. If that be true, then they should also insist that when, the people return, they will not live in houses or cities, but that they will scatter out in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. The truth of the matter is that they take only those expressions in a literal sense which will serve their unholy purposes, and when they come to expressions which do not serve their purposes, they are as quick to spiritualize them as those whom they criticize.

I will make them a blessing. Here is a contrast in the condition of the people of God with their former condition. Under the unfaithful shepherds the people of God had been abused and neglected. They were maimed and diseased without proper food and care, but when God makes his servant David their shepherd and makes a covenant of peace with them, they not only will dwell in peace and happiness, but they will be made a blessing.

There shall be showers of blessing.

Not only will God's people be a blessing to those who are around about them but upon them there will be showers of blessings. God's blessings upon them will enable them to be blessings to others.

Relation to Our Aim

1. Place to be remembered. There is really very little that we know about the place of writing of Ezekiel. He says that he was in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar. (Ezek. 1: 3.) Some think that what Ezekiel calls a river was a canal between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

2. Persons to be remembered, (a) Ezekiel. Ezekiel was not only a prophet but he was a priest of the line of Eleazar. This may explain

why Ezekiel was taken into captivity and Jeremiah was left in Jerusalem, for Jeremiah, though of a priestly family, sprang from the line of Ithamar. The descendants of Eleazar were considered of the priestly aristocracy, while those of Ithamar were considered of the lower or middle class people, (b) Jeremiah. Jeremiah is known as the weeping prophet. He remained in Jerusalem when Ezekiel and others were carried into captivity and endured all the suffer-

ing and privation that other Jews suffered in the last days of Jerusalem and added to that suffered the persecutions of his own people.

3. Lessons to be remembered, (a) God has always represented himself as being the friend and defender of the poor and downtrodden. The poor have cause to rejoice that God is concerned with their welfare and those who mistreat and neglect the poor have cause to fear God's punishment upon them for their neglect and mistreatment of the poor, (b) The shepherds of the east valued the welfare

of the sheep above their own lives. It is for this reason that this figure of speech is used with reference to the relationship between Jehovah and his people. God was willing, in the person of Jesus, to lay down his life for his sheep, (c) Jehovah's covenant with his people is one of peace. It guarantees peace and happiness of all who are his sheep. It does not guarantee physical peace and prosperity, but it does guarantee spiritual peace and prosperity, not only here but to perfection in the world to come.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson

Golden Text Explained

Can you give the natural setting from which our text is taken?

Why does the watchman have a responsibility toward God?

What can you say of the watchman's responsibility for souls?

What can you say of the extent of the watchman's responsibility?

What is the first requirement of a watchman?

Discuss the requirement of faithfulness in the watchman.

What can you say of the watchman's desire to be of help to others?

What can you say of the element of suffering in the work of the watchman?

In what sense are we all watchmen for each other?

introduction

Where did the prophet Ezekiel live at the time of our lesson?

What was his special duty toward his people?

How did Ezekiel compare with Jeremiah in his work?

What did Ezekiel say of the moral conditions of Jerusalem?

How did Ezekiel predict the return of the Jews from captivity?

Jehovah Seeking His Sheep

Can you state the charges which Jehovah made against the shepherds of his people?

What judgment did Jehovah pronounce on these unfaithful shepherds?

What did Jehovah say he would do for his sheep?

Can you show that Jesus is a fulfillment of this promise?

How did Ezekiel comfort the people while in captivity?

Has Ezekiel's promise of gathering the people back to Palestine been fulfilled?

Did any of this promise have a spiritual fulfillment in Jesus Christ?

Jehovah Caring for His Sheep

Where does the good shepherd feed his sheep?

Does our text teach a future literal return of the Jews to the mountains of Israel?

Is the promise of *Jehovah* to be the shepherd fulfilled in Jesus Christ?

What does God promise to do for his sheep which the hirelings did not do?

To whom is reference made in the terms "fat and strong"?

The Covenant of Peace and Its Blessings

What is the covenant of peace mentioned in our text?

What other prophet promised a new covenant for God's people?

What is meant by evil beasts ceasing from the land?

With what terms did Ezekiel describe the security of God's people?

What does God promise to make his people able to do?

Relation To Our Aim

What do you know of the place where Ezekiel lived?

For what is Ezekiel to be remembered?

Why do we remember Jeremiah?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson VII—November 13, 1955

DANIEL AND THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY

Lesson Text

Dan. 6: 1-11

1 It pleaded **Da-ri'-us** to set over the kingdom a hundred and twenty satraps, who should be throughout the whole kingdom;

2 And over them three presidents, of whom Dan'-iel was one; that these satraps might give account unto them,

and that the king should have no damage.

3 Then this Dan'-iel was distinguished above the presidents and the satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.

4 Then the presidents and the satraps sought to find occasion against Dan'iel as touching the kingdom; but they could find no occasion nor fault, forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.

5 Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Dan'iel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.

6 Then these presidents and satraps assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Da-ri-us, live for ever.

7 All the presidents of the Kingdom, the deputies and the satraps, the counsellors and the governors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a strong interdict, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty

days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions.

8 Now, O king, establish the interdict, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Per'-si-ans, which altereth not.

9 Wherefore king Da-ri-us signed the writing and the interdict.

10 And when Dan'iel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house (now his windows were open in his chamber toward Je-ru'-sa-lem); and he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God. *is* he did aforetime.

11 Then these men assembled together, and found Dan'iel making petition and supplication before his God.

Golden Text.—“*But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king’s dainties, (Dan. 1: 8.)*”

Devotional Reading.—Dan. 6: 19-23.

Daily Bible Readings

- November 7. M..... Daniel Triumphs (Dan. 1: 14-21)
- November 8. T. Courage of Daniel’s Friends (Dan. 2: 8-18)
- November 9. W. Daniel’s Friends Tested (Dan. 3: 1-12)
- November 10. T. Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream (Dan. 4: 4-27)
- November 11. F..... Handwriting on the Wall (Dan. 5: 1-12)
- November 12. S..... Daniel Interprets the Writing (Dan. 5: 13-30)
- November 13. S. Answer to Daniel’s Prayer (Dan 9: 20-27)

Time.—537 B. C.

Place.—Babylon.

Persons.—Daniel, King Darius, and Daniel’s enemies.

Golden Text Explained

1. Purpose in the heart, (a) The value of a purpose in the heart. When one has formed a deep, firm purpose in his heart to do that which is right or to refrain from that which is wrong, he has considerable advantage over a person who has not formed such a purpose. When Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king’s dainties and his wine, we notice, first, that Daniel was aware of the fact that these things were to be encountered. Knowing that these things were to be encountered, he would not be taken by surprise. Next, by having a purpose already formed as to what he would do, he was not left to fight his battle in the heat of temptation. If one waits until he gets into a battle with the tempter to decide what he would do under such circumstances, he is at a great disadvantage. It is difficult for peo-

ple to think straight and calmly when they are under severe temptation. So if we will consider such matters before we become involved in tempting circumstances, we can reason more dispassionately, and stand a better chance to arrive at right and suitable conclusions. Then when the temptation presents itself, we do not have to take out time to consider whether the thing is right or wrong or what the doing of that thing might do to our influence. These questions have already been considered, and we have formed a determination as to what we will do and how we will act under certain circumstances. All that is left for us to do then is to boldly announce our determination, our purpose in heart, and then stay with it. (b) The power of purpose in the heart. Having a settled purpose in our heart to do that which is right and refrain from that which is wrong

makes one sure of himself. He can proceed to meet temptations with a firm, decisive tread, not with that halting, faltering uncertainty that characterizes the individual that does not have a purpose of heart. (c) The necessity of purpose in heart. In these days of fast living, when so many things are happening, and we are involved in so many different circumstances, and environments, it is necessary for one to have a definite purpose in life. One can waste a lot of time and energy doing things of no value and things which do not contribute to the ultimate end and purpose of life. So we would say that it is necessary for one to have a definite purpose in life in order that he may relate the many and varied activities to the one final end or objective to which he hopes to attain.

2. Godly purposes require courage,

(a) Daniel's purpose required a lot of courage, because he was acting contrary to the established laws and customs of the country in which he was a captive and to the authorities of the nation who administered those laws. Being a captive, he could not expect the kind, considerate treatment that a regular citizen of the country had a right to expect. And even citizens of those kingdoms ruled by absolute monarchs had very little privilege and consideration coming to them. So Daniel was rather courageous when he proposed to go contrary to their laws and custom. Realizing that he was a captive in a foreign land, he did not make demands, but "he requested" that he be permitted to carry out his purpose. (b) Courage is required for one to be different. Only an eccentric person gets any pleasure out of being different from everybody else. It is human for us to eat like others, dress like others, and deport ourselves, as far as possible, like those with whom we associate. But when conscience demands that we be different in our eating, dressing, or in our social activities, we must be prepared to suffer criticism, ridicule, and sometimes to be ostracized by our social group. With Daniel it meant all of this and more too. For he was liable to physical persecution and even execution. (c) Courage is required to persevere

in our purposes. It is one thing to make a purpose, and another thing to keep that purpose. It is also one thing to live by that purpose for a while and quite a different thing to continue indefinitely by that purpose. Most of us make our New Year's resolutions and then promptly in the first week, or at most the first month of the year, we have broken many of them. To live indefinitely by a solemn purpose, which causes us to be different from our neighbors, until that purpose has become a settled and permanent characteristic of our lives, is a noble thing, but one which requires unusual courage and perseverance.

3. Rewards for purpose of heart.

(a) Maintaining self-respect. Daniel could not have maintained his self-respect had he partaken of things in Babylon which he knew in his own heart he would not partake of back in Jerusalem. People who like one a high plane of morals in their home community, but descend to a low plane of morals when they go to some big city where they are unknown, cannot have much self-respect. (b) Gaining the favor of God. Only through living in harmony with the purpose to serve God faithfully can we hope to gain the favor of God. Certainly Daniel was rewarded with the favor of God because of his purpose and his ability to live up to that purpose. Few men enjoyed the favor of God more than Daniel. But each one of us can have that favor today if we purpose to do right and live in harmony with that purpose. (c) Gaining the favor of men. We are told that God made Daniel to find the kindness and compassion in the sight of the authorities under whom he served. Not all men will respect you for maintaining a godly purpose. Not all the men of Babylon, as we will learn in our lesson today, respected Daniel for his godly purposes. But the man who will not respect you for your godly purposes is the kind of man whose friendship you do not need. So as a reward for forming and keeping godly purposes in the heart, we may expect to have our self-respect, the respect of God, and of good men.

Introduction

As we have seen in previous lessons, Daniel was taken to Babylon during the reign of Jehoiakim in

about 606 B.C. This was the first raid that was made on Jerusalem. A number of the royal seed and the

nobles, men who were capable of receiving an education and training for governmental positions, were taken at this time. It was during their course of training that Daniel asked permission for himself and others to refrain from meat and wine usually served, and to eat herbs and drink water. We find Daniel classed with the magicians, enchanters, and Chaldeans. When, on account of the failure of the Babylonian wise men to reveal and interpret the king's dream, Daniel and his friends, along with these others, were to be put to death. Daniel asked for the privilege of revealing and interpreting the dream and did so to the king's entire satisfaction. As a reward for his service the king "made Daniel great, and gave him many gifts, and made him to rule over the whole province of Babylon, and to be chief governor over all the wise men of Babylon." (Dan. 2: 48.) Some years later it became necessary for Daniel to interpret another dream for Nebuchadnezzar, in which Daniel told the king

that, on account of his pride, the Lord of heaven would humble him and make him to know "that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." (Dan. 4: 25.) Following the death of Nebuchadnezzar, his son succeeded him to the throne. But he reigned only about two years, when he was slain by his brother-in-law. This man was in turn succeeded by his son, who reigned only nine months, at which time Belshazzar, who was the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, came to the throne and reigned for seventeen years. It was Belshazzar who put on the drunken feast and who saw the handwriting on the wall, which was interpreted by Daniel. While this feast was being enjoyed by the king and his nobles, the city was being attacked by the Medes and the Persians. The city fell to the Medes and Persians the night of that great feast, and Belshazzar was slain. Darius, the Mede, received the kingdom and began his reign as is described in our lesson.

Exposition of the Text

I. Daniel Promoted in the Kingdom

(Dan. 6: 1-3)

It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom. It has been rather difficult for scholars to identify this Darius, the Mede, to the satisfaction of all. However, the latest standard works, instead of making Darius and Astyages two different kings, now conclude that Darius was his personal name and that Astyages was his national name. They further agree that he was the son of King Ahasuerus, mentioned in the book of Esther, who is known to profane history as Xerxes.

A hundred and twenty satraps. Darius divided his kingdom into one hundred and twenty provinces, with a governor over each of these.

And over them three presidents. This would mean that the kingdom was divided into three districts, perhaps each one having forty districts, and these three presidents would each control forty satraps or governors. We are told that Daniel was one of these three presidents. The King James Version has the word *first* in the place of the word *one* in our text. On account of the use of the word *first*, it has been thought that Daniel was governor over forty provinces surrounding the capital and so had his office in the capital of the

kingdom. If this is true, it would help us to understand how his next promotion came so soon. We are told that the reason these three presidents were appointed over the satraps of the various provinces was "that these satraps might give account unto them, and that the king should have no damage." In the first place this would take work off the king himself. The satraps were to make their reports unto these presidents and then in turn the presidents unto the king. So instead of the king receiving one hundred and twenty reports, he would receive only three, since the presidents condensed their forty reports into one. Next, it is said that this arrangement was made so the king should receive no damage. By this it is meant that these three presidents would guard the welfare of the king in matters of taxes, loyalty of the satraps, and other such things as involve the safety and security of the nation.

Then this Daniel was distinguished above the presidents. The king decided to promote Daniel to a place of authority over the three presidents of the realm. It amounted to giving Daniel about the same position which Joseph enjoyed in Egypt. He was virtually the ruler of the whole realm.

Because an excellent spirit was in him. The word spirit here likely includes more than simply his attitude or disposition. It perhaps refers to his ability as well. Daniel had been connected with the affairs of the kingdom for a long time. He was acquainted with the religious and social conditions and customs of the various groups of people who made up the nation to a greater degree than perhaps any other individual in the nation. He was known to all as having been the counselor to several kings and as the interpreter of their dreams. The king showed good judgment in the promotion of Daniel and gave evidence of a genuine desire to render the best service possible to the citizens of his kingdom.

II. Daniel's Jealous Enemies Set a Trap (Dan. 6: 4-9)

The presidents and the satraps sought to find occasion against Daniel. The jealousy of these men may be understood when it is remembered that Daniel was a Jew and they were native Babylonians. Another fact which has come to light in recent years may help us to understand their attitude toward Daniel. According to traditions, the Medes and Persians are supposed to have diverted the waters of a river which flowed through Babylon in order to enter the city and capture it. But later information assured us that this had no foundation in fact. Another tradition has it that careless, drunken sentinels left the river gates open and allowed the army to come into the city. But the fact now seems to be well established that the whole official class of Babylon were at enmity with the king and others who made up his court, and that it was through the treachery of this official class that the gates were opened to the Medes and Persians. The entrance was made at night, and when the people of the fort came to the capital the next day, they found Persian guards in charge of the capital. As a reward for their treachery to their own government and assistance to the new government, they were given places of authority. Naturally these Babylonians would expect that preference would be given to them instead of a man who was a foreigner such as Daniel.

But they could find no occasion nor fault. The first effort of these men was to find fault with Daniel's work in his official capacity. They first

looked for some unfaithfulness in him to his superior, but of course their search there was fruitless. Then they began to look for some error or fault in him, which we take to mean some innocent error. In spite of diligent search, they were unable to find even an error caused by oversight.

We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel. These men concluded that they could not find any reason to accuse Daniel before the king with reference to his work in his office. Then they turned to his religion to see if they could use that against him. This was a great compliment to Daniel. When people cannot find any occasion to criticize a man with reference to anything except his religion, that man has surely lived a careful circumspect life. Daniel had been connected with the government so long that, if he had been inclined to be dishonest or to deal dishonorably, in any way, surely these men could have found some record of it or could have found some one who would be as willing to accuse him before the king. If the men who are in high places in our government had been as careful to be faithful and honest and honorable in all their dealings as was Daniel, there would be no need for so many congressional investigations as are going on these days.

All the presidents of the kingdom. Someone had done a good piece of work organizing these officeholders. It is said that not only the presidents, but the deputies and the satraps, the counselors, and the governors, consulted together in this matter. Furthermore, there was perfect generalship in putting their proposition over. In verse 6 we are told that all these officers "assembled together" to see the king. This expression assembled together is translated in the margin "came tumultuously." Other authorities emphasize the meaning of this word in similar terms. It emphasized the suddenness and the force of their approach to the king.

Have consulted together, to establish a royal statute. First, they put over the idea to the king that all of these offices of the entire kingdom were in accord on this matter. Next, they made it known to the king that they wanted "a strong interdict." They were not willing to accept some weak, uncertain statement of the king's wishes on this matter. They

wanted it to be an unchangeable law with all the force of the great Median king behind it.

Whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days. As a matter of background for this, it should be remembered that during the reign of former kings there had been a number of religious changes. The foreign elements that had been captured and brought into the realm had been allowed to bring their gods with them. The Jews were not the only people who were captured and taken into this territory. While the Jews took no idols with them, yet these other nations brought their gods and their idols along. This tended to minimize the honor given to the local gods of Babylon. When the new government took over, these local deities were replaced in their ancient shrines, and their worship was encouraged. This tended to stir up dissatisfaction with these foreign elements in the realm. So there was a well-grounded fear for religious riots in the realm. It is thought by some that these officers of the kingdom proposed this new statute as a means of averting religious trouble in the realm. Their proposition was that the king sign a statute which made it unlawful for any man to pray to any god or man except the king for the space of thirty days. The penalty for violation of this statute was that the guilty one should be cast into the den of lions.

Now, O king, establish the interdict. Again, we may raise the question, why would the king entertain these men and act upon their suggestion without consulting Daniel? Holding the office that he did would certainly give Daniel a right to expect the king to consult with him before signing any such statute. In the first place, just a little knowledge of human nature would suggest to us that these men picked the time when they would present this matter to the king, and it is unreasonable to think that they would pick a time when Daniel was with the king, or that the king could easily contact him. In the next place, there is every reason to believe that they insisted that the matter was urgent, that no time should be lost, and that the welfare of the kingdom depended upon an immediate signing of such a statute. And third, since Daniel did not worship idols, it would not occur to the king that this law would affect him

in any way. These men were careful to insist that the king put this law in the class of those laws which could not be abrogated during the time set for it to be in force. This did not mean that the law could never be changed, but it did mean that it could not be changed within the thirty days prescribed for it to be in force.

III. Daniel Faithful Under Trial (Dan. 6:10,11)

When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house. We are not told how much time elapsed between the signing of the law and Daniel's knowledge of it. But of course not much time could have elapsed since Daniel was in position to know the things that occurred in the capital. Furthermore, there is evidence in the context that Daniel did not take the trouble to talk with the king about it. In verses 13 and 14 we are led to believe that the king did not know that his statute affected Daniel in any way until he was told that Daniel had violated the law.

His windows were open in his chamber toward Jerusalem. The Jewish habit of praying at a window open toward Jerusalem arose in their captivity, although it is mentioned by Solomon in his prayer of dedication of the temple. Solomon thought of a time when the people would sin against Jehovah and they would be carried captive into a foreign land. He prayed that God would listen to their prayers in those foreign lands when they would repent of their sins, "and pray unto thee toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name." (1 Kings 8: 48.) It is possible that this mention by Solomon of praying toward the land of Judah and the city of Jerusalem, where the temple was built, caused the Jews to engage in the practice during their captivity. Another thought is suggested here by the statement that Daniel's windows were open toward Jerusalem. Daniel did not close his windows to do his praying. He could have very easily made it most difficult for his enemies to catch him at his prayers, but he did not even go to so much trouble as to close his windows to keep them from getting the evidence which they desired.

He kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed. Daniel had

his regular time for praying. He would not allow a law passed by the king to interfere with his regular program of worship. Like Peter and other apostles, Daniel felt that he was to obey God rather than men. No doubt, Daniel's prayer life had a

very vital connection with, and was responsible for, his integrity, faithfulness, and loyalty for which he is known and honored. When men forget to pray, they become careless about a lot of other things which go to make up good character.

Relation to Our Aim

1. Place to be remembered. Babylon is to be remembered as the place where Daniel spent most of his time in captivity, and the place where he exerted more influence on the government than any other man of his time.

2. Persons to be remembered, (a) Darius. Darius is to be remembered as the son of Ahasuerus or Xerxes. He is the one who overthrew Belshazzar and brought to an end the reign and influence of Nebuchadnezzar. (b) Daniel. Daniel will be remembered for his purpose to be pure in heart and in life, for his faithfulness to God in time of trial, and for

the service which he rendered a number of kings in whose territory he lived and worked.

3. Lessons to be remembered, (a) Promotion is the reward of the capable, industrious, faithful, dependable, loyal, and God-fearing people, (b) Those who are promoted may expect to arouse the jealousy of the incapable, the lazy, the unfaithful, and self-serving, who expect the world to give them a living, (c) If every member of this church were as determined and faithful in his prayer life as Daniel was, there would be a big revival among us.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

Discuss the value of a purpose in the heart?

What can you say of the power of a purpose in the heart?

How necessary to right living is a purpose in the heart?

Why did Daniel's purpose in his heart require courage?

Why does living different from others require courage?

What is the connection between courage and perseverance in good purposes?

State and discuss three rewards of godly purposes.

Introduction

When was Daniel taken into captivity?

For what was Daniel and his friends placed in training?

Why was Daniel's life in danger?

What do you know of Daniel's connection with Belshazzar?

Daniel Promoted in the Kingdom

Can you identify the Darius of our lesson?

How many provinces were in the kingdom of Darius?

What position did Daniel hold in the kingdom?

What was the duty of these three presidents?

What unusual promotion came to Daniel?

What was the reason of Daniel being selected to this position?

Daniel's Jealous Enemies Set A Trap

How do you account for the jealousy of Daniel's enemies?

Where did Daniel's enemies first try to find fault with him?

What confession did these men make as to the character of Daniel?

What can you say of the organization of Daniel's enemies?

In what manner did they approach the king with their proposition?

What request did they make of the king?

What condition in the realm at that time made their proposition acceptable to the king?

Can you account for the king's signing this statute without consulting Daniel?

Daniel Faithful Unto Trial

Did Daniel talk with the king about this statute before he was arrested for violating it?

When did the Jewish habit of praying toward Jerusalem begin?

What evidence do we have that Daniel made no effort to keep his enemies from seeing him pray toward Jerusalem?

What do you know of Daniel's prayer habits?

What is characteristic of men who forget or do not take time to pray?

Relation To Our Aim

For what do we remember Babylon?

Why do we remember Darius?

For what does Daniel deserve to be remembered?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson VIII—November 20, 1955

DANIEL PRAYS FOR THE PEOPLE

Lesson Text

Dan. 9: 3-11; Ezek. 14: 1-6

3 And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.

4 And I prayed unto Je-ho'-vah my God, and made confession, and said, Oh, Lord, the great and dreadful God, who keepeth covenant and lovingkindness with them that love him and keep his commandments,

5 We have sinned, and have dealt perversely, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even turning aside from thy precepts and from thine ordinances;

6 Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, that spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

7 O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face, as at this day; to the men of Ju'dah, and to the inhabitants of Jeru'-sa-lem, and unto all Is'-ra-el, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee.

8 O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee.

9 To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness; for we nave rebelled against him;

10 Neither have we obeyed the voice of Je-ho'-vah our God, to walk

in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.

11 Yea, all Is'-ra-el have transgressed thy law, even turning aside, that they should not obey thy voice: therefore hath the curse been poured out upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Mo'-ses the servant of God; for we have sinned against him.

1 Then came certain of the elders of Is'-ra-el unto me, and sat before me.

2 And the word of Je-ho'-vah came unto me, saying,

3 Son of man, these men have taken their idols into their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them?

4 Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Je-ho'-vah: Every man of the house of Is'-ra-el that taketh his idols into his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I Je-ho'-vah will answer him therein according to the multitude of his idols;

5 That I may take the house of Is'-ra-el in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols.

6 Therefore say unto the house of Is'-ra-el, Thus saith the Lord Je-ho'-vah: Return ye, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*“Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against Jehovah in ceasing to pray for you: but I will instruct you in the good and the right way”* (1 Sam. 12: 23.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 137: 1-9.

Daily Bible Readings

- November 14. M. A Promise of Liberty (Deut. 30: 1-10)
- November 15. T. New Heart Promised (Ezek. 36: 22-31)
- November 16. W. Renewal (Ezek. 36: 32-38)
- November 17. T. Return to Homeland Predicted (Jer. 50: 17-30)
- November 18. F. Sin the Cause of Captivity (Neh. 9: 26-31)
- November 19. S. Jehovah a Good God (Neh. 9: 33-38)
- November 20. S. A Promise to Keep the Law (Neh. 10: 32-39)

TIME.—For Daniel, 538 B.C.; for Ezekiel, 594 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Daniel, Ezekiel, and Jehovah.

Golden Text Explained

1. Failure to pray for others, (a)

Sin against Jehovah. Samuel made this statement contained in our text when the people refused to submit to his rule any longer and demanded that they have a king like the nations round about them. At first Samuel was not inclined to grant their wish, but Jehovah told Samuel that the people had not rejected him, but that they had rejected Jehovah instead. He told Samuel to let the people have their way and appoint for them a king, but to point out for the people the consequences of the step which they were about to take. Samuel reminded the people of the fact that their rejection of God was a grievous sin against God, but told them that Jehovah would not forsake his people on this account for his name's sake, because Jehovah intended to make a great people of this nation for himself. Being no longer able to rule over them, Samuel would content himself with praying to God in their behalf and instructing them as to how they should live. It would be a fine thing today if all of us could realize that a failure to pray for our brethren and for all for whom the Lord teaches us to pray is a sin against Jehovah. No doubt each one of us sins every day in that we fail to pray for others who need our prayers,

(b) To fail to pray for others is not only a sin against Jehovah, but it is a sin against those for whom we should pray. If someone fails in time of trial and temptation just because we were so lacking in interest and sympathy for that one as to fail to pray for him, we may be charged in the judgment with that brother's failure. We learned in our lesson about watchmen being responsible for those whose care and welfare they held in their hands. If they failed to warn them of coming danger, the scripture says that the blood of the people would be upon the hands of the watchmen. It would be a fearful thing in judgment to find that the blood of lost souls is upon our hands because we failed to pray for them, (c) Failing to pray for others robs us of spiritual growth. Any spiritual activity contributes to spiritual growth. And failure to engage in spiritual activity will result in failure to grow spiritually. But there is a degree of brotherly love and interest in each other's welfare that cannot be attained by any means

except sincere, earnest, fervent prayers for one another. It is this genuine heart interest in each other that we need and that comes through exercise in fervent prayer for one another

2. Examples of prayer for others,

(a) Moses furnishes us with a fine example of praying for others. (Ex 32: 31, 32.) When Aaron led the people into making the golden calf at Sinai, Moses returned to Jehovah on the morrow and confessed the sin of the people and pled for their forgiveness. He arose to that height of self-sacrifice that enabled him to say, "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." (b) Nehemiah gives us another good example of praying for others. (Neh. 1: 4-11.) Nehemiah's brother and some other men came from Jerusalem and told Nehemiah of the pitiful condition of the Jews who had returned under Zerubbabel. Nehemiah was so touched with their desolate condition that he mourned and wept for several days and then began to pray unto the Lord. He confessed the sins of his people, but reminded the Lord of his promise to bring the people back again provided they would repent, and then he besought the Lord to be attentive to the prayer of his servants who delight to fear the Lord's name, and to prosper Nehemiah in the sight of the king of whom he expected assistance. (c) Paul the apostle is a fine example of one praying for others. In most of the epistles which he wrote he voiced a prayer for the people to whom he was writing. Not only did he pray for the brethren in the church, but he also prayed for his brethren in the flesh, and rose to that height to which Moses rose, being willing to lose his own soul that he might gain those of his brethren. (Rom. 9: 1-4.) And he felt the need of prayer himself and often asked people to pray for him. This is especially true in his letter to the church at Home. (Rom. 15: 30-33.)

3. Instruction accompanies prayer,

(a) People must have instruction as to how to live. There is little need to pray for an individual to live right if that individual does not know what right living is. We are told to pray for our daily bread, but prayer without work is not the Lord's way of giving that daily

bread. So we are to pray for others that they may live right, but prayer without teaching them what is right would not be worth much. So Samuel said he would not only pray for his people, but that he would instruct them in the good and the right way.

(b) This teaching is necessary because we can prevent people from walking in the wrong way. The prophet tells us that it is not in man that walks to direct his own steps. We must depend upon direction from a higher source. That direction comes only through teaching. Hence, we need teaching to keep us out of the wrong paths that we may walk in the right way. (c) Instruction will

keep us conscious of God. Men who are conscious of God, and what God expects of them, and of God's displeasure at sin will come nearer walking in the right way than those who are not continually conscious of the presence of God. If men are taught regularly about God, and their relationship to God, their responsibilities in that relationship, they will come nearer living right than they will if they have no regular instruction. From these considerations, we conclude that instruction in right living should accompany prayers in the behalf of people that they may live right.

Introduction

Concerning the prayer of Daniel, which we are about to study, one commentator says: "This prayer is remarkable for its simplicity, its fervor, its appropriateness, its earnestness. It is a frank confession that the Hebrew people, in whose name it was offered, had deserved all the calamities which had come upon them, accompanied with earnest intercession that God would now hear this prayer, and remove the judgments from the people, and accomplish his purpose of mercy toward the city and temple. The long captivity of nearly seventy years; the utter desolation of the city and capital during that time; the numberless privations and evils to which during that period they had been exposed had demonstrated the greatness of the

sins for which these calamities had come upon the nation, and Daniel now, in the name, and uttering the sentiments of the captive people, confessed their guilt, and the justness of the divine dealings with them. Never has there been an instance in which punishment has had more of its designed and appropriate effect than in prompting to the sentiments which are uttered in this prayer: and the prayer, therefore, is just the expression of what we should feel when the hand of the Lord has been long and severely laid upon us on account of our sins. The burden of the prayer is confession; the object which he who offers it seeks is that God would cause the severity of his judgments to cease, and the city and temple to be restored." (Barnes.)

Exposition of the Text

I. Daniel's Confession and Prayer (Dan. 9: 3-11)

I set my face unto the Lord God. Since Daniel had a custom of praying with his windows open toward Jerusalem, this verse may suggest that he turned his face toward Jerusalem for this prayer. However, the idea of setting one's face toward the Lord may mean no more than simply turning one's attention to the Lord in prayer. In the verses preceding the lesson text we learn that Daniel was moved to offer this prayer at this time because he had been reading the word of Jehovah written by Jeremiah the prophet. From the writings of Jeremiah he learned that the captivity was to last only seventy years. Knowing when the captivity

began, Daniel figured that it was about time for the captivity to end. Since Daniel was carried away in the first raid made by Nebuchadnezzar, he would be in good position to know when the captivity started. Furthermore, if Daniel considered the writings of Jeremiah the word of Jehovah, we have good reason to accept those writings as inspired.

With fasting and sackcloth and ashes. This gives us some idea of the degree of interest Daniel had in these matters, that he would make it a matter of fasting and prayer while dressed in sackcloth and putting ashes on himself.

I prayed unto Jehovah my God, and made confession. Daniel begins his prayer with a short address to God

and then a confession of sins. This confession is not a confession of personal sins but of the national sins, which brought the captivity upon his people. When men have it in their minds to pray to God about afflictions and trials through which they are passing, brought on by their sins, the natural thing to do, and that required by the Lord, is a full, free, frank confession of the sins that brought on the suffering. If one is inclined yet to justify himself in his deeds or to hide any of his guilt and meanness in committing the deeds, that one is not ready to pray to God for forgiveness or for a cessation of suffering as punishment for the sin.

Oh, Lord, the great and dreadful God. Lord is not dreadful in the sense that he excites terror and apprehension, but rather in the sense of inspiring awe and reverence. And the word great applies to him with reference to all his attributes and characteristics. He is great in his power, wisdom, holiness, mercy, love, justice, etc. David also speaks of God as one who keeps covenant and lovingkindness with people who love him and keep his commandments. To keep covenant means to be faithful and true to one's promises and obligations. God has never been known to fail to keep a promise which he has made when the conditions of that promise are faithfully met. His lovingkindness is abundant and endures forever.

We have sinned, and have dealt perversely. Having said that God keeps his covenant with those who love him and keep his commandments, Daniel now confesses the sins of his people in which they broke their part of the covenant, releasing God from any obligation to continue to be merciful and long-suffering with the sinner. Daniel uses four terms to describe the wrongdoings of the Jews. He uses the word sins, which comes from a word meaning to fail to hit the mark. The people had failed to do that which God expected of them. Next he says that they had dealt perversely. The word perverse means to deviate from the right, the true, and the correct, and it has somewhat the sense of being obstinate and willful in the doing of the thing that is wrong. And next he said that they had done wickedly. The word suggests that they were morally bad. And no one can read the accusations which the prophets made against the people

prior to the captivity without realizing how frightfully bad the morals of the people were. The fourth term Daniel used to describe their sin is the word rebel. This word has the idea of renouncing and opposing those in authority, to be insubordinate. And when God sent his prophets to the people with a message of repentance, and the people stoned the prophets, they manifested an ugly spirit of rebellion, of resisting the authority that sent the prophets for the purpose of correction.

Even turning aside from thy precepts and from thine ordinances Their sins, their perverseness, their wickedness, and their rebellion were all manifest in the fact that they turned aside from the teachings and ordinances of God.

Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets. Daniel has in mind the law of Moses when he speaks of the precepts and ordinances. The teaching of the Lord through the prophets is mentioned in addition to the precepts and ordinances.

Righteousness belongeth unto thee but unto us confusion of face. Daniel draws a contrast here justifying God in his dealings with the people and placing all the blame for their desolate condition upon the people themselves. He says that confusion of face belongs to the people; he simply means that they are embarrassed and shamed on account of their sinfulness. And he continues to say that this confusion of face is unto all that have been scattered in all the countries because of their transgressions. The next verse is simply a condensed form of that which has gone before in which he says, "To us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee."

To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness. In verse 7 Daniel ascribed righteousness unto Jehovah, meaning that God had dealt rightly with the people by bringing them into captivity, that God was fully justified in doing such. Now in this verse he goes further and ascribes unto God mercy and forgiveness. If God were to deal with us strictly on the basis of justice, none of us would ever be saved. It is only when his justice is richly seasoned with mercy that we have any hope whatever of salvation. For-

giveness is not a fruit of the justice of God but of the mercy of God. So Daniel rightly connects their suffering with the righteousness of God and their forgiveness with the mercy of God.

Neither have ye obeyed the voice of Jehovah our God. Daniel gives this as a reason why he is ascribing mercy and forgiveness to God. Since his people had not obeyed the voice of God, to walk in his laws, as those laws were voiced by the prophets, they needed the mercy and forgiveness of God.

Th ere fore hath the curse been poured upon us. This statement refers to Deut. 28: 15-39. In this passage Moses spoke of God's punishment upon them and upon the king whom they would select because of their disobedience to God. This suggests two things helpful to us in this day of doubt and infidelity. (a) Daniel accepted the book of Deuteronomy as the writings of Moses. Critics have long tried to prove that the book was written by later authors, but we see here that Daniel accepted it as a book written by Moses, (b) Daniel also accepted the writings of Moses as the word of God. When the people disobeyed that which was written by Moses, Daniel confessed that they had disobeyed the word and voice of God. This is final as proof to all who accept the word of Daniel and the Jews of his time.

15. Jehovah Calls on Israel to Turn from Idols (Ezek. 14: 1-6)

Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me. In Ezek. 8: 1 we are told that certain elders of Judah came and sat before Ezekiel. Some have thought that the elders of Judah represent the people of the southern kingdom, while the elders of Israel represent the people of the northern kingdom who were in captivity. However, the context does not seem to bear out this distinction. The terms are likely used interchangeably. Their coming and sitting before the prophet indicated that they wished to inquire of him the will of the Lord on certain matters, or perhaps to see if the Lord had any revelation for them.

These men have taken their idols into their heart. While these elders of Israel were sitting before Ezekiel, the Lord gave the prophet a message concerning the hearts of these men. He said that their idols had been

taken into their hearts. This expression does not necessarily imply that they were guilty of open idolatry, but rather implies intention or desire to go back into the idolatry which they and their fathers practiced in Palestine, and which brought upon them the terrible sufferings they were enduring in captivity.

And put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face The stumblingblock of their iniquity is the same thing as the idol in their heart. Whatever it was that they had in their heart was a stumblingblock in their approach to God. It is easy for us to pass judgment on people who bow down to graven images, yet there may be idols in our hearts that are just as great stumblingblocks in our approach to God as those graven images are. That which a man loves more than he loves God is his idol. That which he will not give up in order that he may enjoy the communion of God is his idol. Pleasure, business, family, and a lot of lawful things may become idols when we become too deeply attached to them.

Should I be inquired of at all by them? This implies that these men had already set their idol in their heart, so why should they come to the Lord for instruction. Solomon said, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind!" (Prov. 21: 27.) These men came as if they were interested in the will of the Lord, and yet they had their minds set on idolatry.

I Jehovah will answer him therein according to the multitude of his idols. Jehovah told Ezekiel to say to these men, "Every man of the house of Israel that taketh his idols into his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet: I Jehovah will answer him therein according to the multitude of his idols." By this the Lord simply means that he will deal with them as if they were actually and outwardly what they really are in their hearts. It is impossible for men to hide anything from God. And when men go before the Lord with impure disobedient hearts and act as if they were inquiring sincerely and earnestly of the Lord, they may expect to be treated according to what they are in their hearts and not what they profess to be.

That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart. By this Jehovah means that he will treat the house of Israel according to that which they have in their heart. There is no promise in this statement. It is a threat to deal with people according to the condition of their hearts, and this threat is made, "because they are all estranged from me through their idols."

Return ye, and turn yourselves from your idols. Though these men had come with insincere hearts, the door of mercy is not even then closed against them. They are exhorted to return unto the Lord. And that return to the Lord meant turning

themselves away from their idols and from all their abominations. No man can turn to the Lord while he holds on to his idols and other abominable practices. So they were exhorted to a thorough and genuine repentance in their hearts and a complete reformation of their lives. It matters not how deeply men have gone into sin, if they can find the willingness of heart to repent and turn away from their iniquities, the Lord will receive them back gladly and forgive them of their sins hand give them a new start in life. And for this mercy and goodness on the part of Jehovah, all of us have cause to be eternally grateful.

Lessons to Be Remembered

(a) Confession of sins is essential as an indication of readiness to receive forgiveness.

(b) Suffering and adversity in the Old Testament are associated with disobedience. Since these things are written for our examples (Rom. 15: 4; 1 Cor 10: 6, 11), may we not con-

clude that God often brings such upon people now on account of their sins?

(c) Sincerity must characterize our approach to God. Thorough heart searching should be a part of our daily practice, that God may not answer us according to the multitude of our idols.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

Can you give the setting of our text?

Why would failure to pray for the people be a sin against Jehovah?

Why is our failure to pray for others a sin against them?

Why does failing to pray for others rob us of spiritual growth?

Can you tell of the prayer of Moses for others?

Can you give the high point in the prayer of Nehemiah for others?

What do you know of Paul's example and teaching about prayer for others?

Why should instruction accompany prayer for others?

Introduction

For what is this prayer of Daniel remarkable?

Of what elements is this prayer composed?

What elements in the prayer prove that God's purpose in punishing Israel had been achieved?

What was the primary object of Daniel's prayer?

Daniel's Confession and Prayer

Why was Daniel moved to offer this prayer at this time?

What had Daniel learned from the reading of Jeremiah?

What accompanied this prayer which suggests the intense interest that Daniel had in the matter?

Was this confession of sins personal?

How did Daniel address Jehovah in this prayer?

In what sense is God dreadful?

What did Daniel mean by saying that God keeps his covenants?

State and discuss four terms which Daniel uses to describe their sins?

In what did their sin and rebellion consist?

What did Daniel say belongs unto Jehovah?

What unto his people?

What would happen to us if God should deal with us strictly on the basis of justice?

What attribute of God should sinful man most appreciate?

What reason did Daniel assign for the curse of God being upon his people?

Jehovah Calls on Israel

To Turn from Idols

Who is mentioned in our text as coming and sitting before Ezekiel?

What was the purpose of their coming to Ezekiel?

What message did Jehovah give Ezekiel concerning these elders?

Does one have to bow down to graven images to be an idolater?

What is meant by answering them according to the multitude of their idols?

What evidence do we have that the door of mercy was still open to these people with idolatrous hearts?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to be remembered?

Lesson IX—November 27, 1955

PREPARATION FOR THE RETURN

Lesson Text

Ezra 1: 1-11

1 Now in the first year of Cy'-rus king of Per'-si-a, that the word of Je-ho'-vah by the mouth of Jer-e-mi'-ah might be accomplished, Je-ho'-vah stirred up the spirit of Cy - rus king of Per'-si-a, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

2 Thus saith Cy'-rus king of Per'-si-a, All the kingdoms of the earth hath Je-ho'-vah, the God of heaven, given me; and he hath charged me to build him a house in Je-ru'-sa-lem, which is in Ju'-dah.

3 Whosoever there is among you of all his people, his God be with him, and let him go up to Je-ru'-sa-lem, which is in Ju'-dah, and build the house of Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el (he is God), which is in Je-ru'-sa-lem.

4 And whosoever is left, in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the freewill-offering for the house of God which is in Je-ru'-sa-lem.

5 Then rose up the heads of fathers' houses of Ju'-dah and Ben'-ja-min, and the priests, and the Le'-vites. even all whose spirit God had

stirred to go up to build the house of Je-ho'-vah which is in Je-ru'-sa-lem.

6 And all they that were round about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, besides all that was willingly offered.

7 Also Cy'-rus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of Je-ho'-vah, which Neb-u-chad-nez'-zar had brought forth out of Je-ru'-sa-lem, and had put in the house of his gods;

8 Even those did Cy'-rus king of Per'-si-a bring forth by the hand of Mith'-re-dath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Shesn-baz-zar. the prince of Ju'-dah.

9 And this is the number of them: thirty platters of gold, a thousand platters of silver, nine and twenty knives,

10 Thirty bowls of gold, silver bowls of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand.

11 All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Shesh-baz'-zar bring up, when they of the captivity were brought up from Bab'-y-lon unto Je-ru'-sa-lem.

Golden Text.—"Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath Jehovah, the God of heaven, given me; and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah " (2 Chron 36: 23.)

Devotional Reading.—Jer. 29: 10-14.

Daily Bible Readings

November 21.	M.	Captivity of Judah (2 Chron. 36: 14-21)
November 22.	T.	Mourning in Babylon (Psalm 137: 1-6)
November 23.	W.	Return Prophesied (Jer. 29: 10-14)
November 24.	T.	The Decree of Cyrus (Ezra 1: 1-4)
November 25.	F.	Joy in Deliverance (Psalm 126: 1-4)
November 26.	S.	Spiritual Restoration (Psalm 124)
November 27.	S.	Greater Deliverance Typified (Isa. 52: 1-15)

TIME.—536 B. C.

Place.—Babylon.

Persons.—Jehovah, Cyrus, and captive Israelites.

Golden Text Explained

1. God's place among: the kingdoms of this world. Daniel tells us that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, dreamed that he saw a great tree

furnishing shade and fruit to birds, beasts, and men. He also saw a holy one come down from heaven and give order to cut down the tree

but to leave the stump of its roots in the earth. And this was to continue for seven seasons or years. The purpose of this action was also revealed in the dream, which was, "to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the lowest of men." Daniel explained to the king that the tree represented the king and the holy one coming down giving orders to cut down the tree represented God giving the decree that this experience should come upon Nebuchadnezzar. His interpretation follows. "That thou shalt be driven from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and thou shalt be made to eat grass as oxen, and shalt be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee; till thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule." (Dan. 4: 24-26.) From this we learn that God has something to do with putting men in places of authority, and also with removing them from their offices. Paul teaches that we are to be in subjection to the higher powers, for there is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God. Paul further says that rulers are ministers of God to us for good, if we do that which is good, but that he is a minister of God and avenger of wrath to them that do evil. (Rom. 13: 1-7.) We are told to pray for rulers that we may be able to lead a quiet life in all godliness and gravity. (1 Tim. 2: 1, 2.) If God had nothing to do with the affairs of the kingdoms of this world, there would be no need for us to pray that he may so order affairs that our lives may be peaceful.

2. Jehovah's charge to Cyrus. Just how and when this charge was given to Cyrus we do not know. However, we do know that Isaiah mentioned Cyrus by name saying, "He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure, even saying of Jerusalem, She shall be built; and of the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith Jehovah to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him,

and I will loose the loins of kings; to open the doors before him, and the gates shall not be shut." (Isa. 44: 28, 45: 1.) And we know that the writings of prophets were distributed and circulated among the captives in Babylonia, for Daniel mentions his reading the book of Jeremiah the prophet. (Dan. 9: 1, 2.) And we also know that the influence of Daniel and Ezekiel on the rulers and people of Babylon was very great. We do not know how long Ezekiel lived nor whether he ever had an opportunity to influence personally Cyrus the king. But we know that Daniel lived during the reign of Cyrus, for "so this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian." (Dan. 6: 28.) The last note we have as to how long Daniel survived during the reign of Cyrus is found in Dan. 10: 1, where he tells us of an experience which happened to him in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia. We also know that Daniel learned from reading Jeremiah's book that the time for the return of the captives of Jerusalem was near. Daniel was so interested in that matter that he put on sackcloth and went into a period of fasting and prayer concerning the matter. Occupying the place he did in the government, it is unthinkable that he should be so interested in the return of his brethren, without making any mention of it to the king. It is entirely possible that God appeared to Cyrus and gave him the charge directly. But from our knowledge of God's way of doing such things, we prefer to believe that God gave his charge to Cyrus through these prophets.

3. Cyrus is a **good example of men connected with government today,**

(a) He set a good example by recognizing the hand of God in his elevation to office. Nebuchadnezzar learned that God sets up rulers and removes them according to his own will. To what extent God takes a hand in the affairs of our government today and what means he uses to control such affairs we are not informed. But we do know that the men who recognize God's providence in their elevation to office and are God-fearing in the conduct of their affairs make the best officers, (b) Cyrus set a good example to rulers of nations by encouraging the worship of Jehovah according to his will. Those rulers who recognize God and

encourage the study of God's word and allow people the freedom of worship contribute most to the happiness of their subjects and to the strength of their kingdom, (c) Cyrus set a good example for rulers today in that he enacted such laws

as would contribute to the freedom of worship among his subjects. He did not force the Jews in his territory to leave and go back to Palestine, but he gave permission to all who wished to go that they might worship God.

Introduction

The preparation for the return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity was twofold, (a) A change in the attitude of rulers. From the time Nebuchadnezzar carried the Jews into Babylonian captivity unto the time of Darius, the kings had the idea that the best way to deal with the Jews was to keep them in captivity and use such measures as would keep them under subjection. But with the accession of Darius and his experience with Daniel and the lions, this attitude was changed. Darius made a decree that all in his kingdom should tremble with fear before the God of Daniel; for he is the living God, and steadfast forever, and his kingdom that which will not be destroyed; and his dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lion." (Dan. 6: 26, 27.) The attitude of Cyrus is well described in the term which God used of him calling him his shepherd. The attitude of the shepherd is not one of oppression but of tender care and helpfulness. (b) There was preparation on the part of the people. The people had to be cured of their idolatry. Being separated from their temple, they became less formal and more spiritual in their worship and their sufferings and their longings for the land, and the temple which God gave them led them to read the scriptures more than they

had ever done before. This contributed to their growth spiritually and helped to cure them of their idolatry. And anything which causes people to study the word of God today is good for them, though they may not be able to appreciate it at the present. And the exile was a sifting experience which preserved the best of the people for the replanting in Palestine. Nebuchadnezzar sifted them for the best and strongest mentally and physically when he took them into captivity; he left the weak and aged behind. Then when Cyrus allowed them to return it was on a voluntary basis; no one was forced to return. This time it was those whose love for God and the work and purpose of God moved them to endure the hardships of the return and rebuilding who were sifted from among those who had learned to love Babylon and the material things of life. So Canaan was resettled by people who were deeply religious, who knew something of God's purposes, and who were willing to suffer to help accomplish those purposes. Someone said that in looking for seed to plant New England three centuries ago the Lord sifted two kingdoms (England and Holland) for the best they had. With equal truth it may be said that the Lord of providence on the same wise principles sifted the Jewish people twice over to get out the best seed for replanting the land of promise.

Exposition of the Text

1. Cyrus Proclaims a Return (Ezra 1: 1-4)

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia. The birth and early life of Cyrus are not well known. Tradition says that his father was Cambyses, a man of the royal family of Persia, and that his mother was Mandane, the daughter of the last king of Media. Tradition says that the child grew up in a harem, and after an effort on the part of his father to kill him. According to this same

legend, when Cyrus grew to manhood, he headed a revolt which ended in the defeat of the king of Media and gave Cyrus the throne. His capture of Croesus and the kingdom of Lydia furnished him with all the wealth his heart could desire. According to Herodotus, Cyrus died in battle in 529 B.C. "In 539 B.C. or 538 B.C. Babylonian security was attacked, and after a stout defense fell before his irresistible bands. This victory first brought the Persians into contact with the

Jews. The conquerors found in Babylon an oppressed race—like themselves abhorers of idols—and professors of a religion in which to a great extent they could sympathize. This race, which the Babylonian monarchs had torn violently from their native land and settled in the vicinity of Babylon, Cyrus decided to restore to their own country; which he did by the remarkable edict recorded in the first chapter of Ezra. Thus commenced that friendly connection between the Jews and the Persians, which prophecy had already foreshadowed, and which formed so remarkable a feature in the Jewish history." (Smith's Bible Dictionary.)

The word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah. This refers to the prophecy which Jeremiah made concerning the return of the people of Israel from Babylonian captivity. He said, "for thus saith Jehovah, After seventy years are accomplished for Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good work toward you, in causing you to return to this place." (Jer. 29: 10.)

Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus. We have seen in the treatment of the golden text that Isaiah prophesied that a man by the name of Cyrus would be used as a shepherd of his people to rebuild Jerusalem. We also notice the influence which the prophecy of Jeremiah had on Daniel and in turn the influence which Daniel exercised on these kings under whom he served. It is therefore very probable that the spirit of Cyrus was stirred up to make this proclamation concerning the returning of the Jews by the influence of these prophets on him.

All the kingdoms of the earth hath Jehovah, the God of heaven, given me. This is quite an exaggerated statement on the part of Cyrus. He lacked a lot of being the ruler of all the nations of the earth at the time he made this statement. And, of course, never did he during his life have dominion over all the nations of the earth. But the statement is unusual in that it ascribes his power over these nations as coming from Jehovah the God of heaven. We are told that the old inscriptions found in that country are practically universal in reporting the Persian kings as giving their praises unto Ormuzd as their god. But since Jehovah had called Cyrus by name, and had

indicated that Cyrus was to be the shepherd of Jehovah, he is led to give Jehovah credit for his position.

Whosoever there is among you all his people. Since both the kingdom of Israel, which went into Assyrian captivity, and the kingdom of Judah, which went into Babylonian captivity, were within the limits of the kingdom of Cyrus, this proclamation would include Israel as well as Judah, and there is some indication that people from both nations were included in the return. Jeremiah said, "For, lo, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will turn again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith Jehovah; and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it." (Jer. 30: 3.) Ezekiel made a statement which many scholars think refers to a return of a part of the people in the first captivity in Ezek. 37: 15-28. God told the prophet to take two sticks, one for Israel and one for Judah. The prophet was to join these sticks in the sight of the people, then explain the meaning of the procedure. The meaning was that God would bring back such captives as wished to return from both captivities, "and I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel: and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no mere two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, . . . nor with any of their transgressions." "There are parts of this prophecy which lead to the time of Christ (verse 24), and it is possible that a literal return of any of the kingdom of Israel is not meant, but it looks as if the prophecy was to have first its literal fulfillment, and then a second and spiritual fulfillment in Israel as the church of God under King David, who is Christ. . . . There are those who claim that no part of the ten tribes has ever returned, and therefore this prophecy has yet to be fulfilled. Ezra says there were forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty people who returned. He gives the number of the different families who returned, and when these are added we have the sum of twenty-nine thousand eight hundred and eighteen. That leaves twelve thousand five hundred and forty-two people to be accounted for. Who were they? Several conservative scholars

think these were exiles of the kingdom of Israel mentioned by both Jeremiah and Ezekiel as suggested above. And, if that be true, these prophecies have had their literal fulfillment. If this is not true, the prophecies must be looked upon as having only a spiritual fulfillment in the church under Christ (as David, for he was the son of David), and the only fulfillment they are ever to have." (Annual Lesson Commentary, 1948.)

Whosoever is left. Cyrus makes it clear not only that all who wish to return may go, but that those who do not wish to return are not forced to do so. But he also says that those who are forced to stay in his realm should help bear the expense of the return of others to Palestine.

II. Gifts from the People (Ezra 1: 5,

6)

Houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites. No mention is made of any who helped in this except those tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi. But there is one more passage which should be considered in relation to those given on this point above found in 1 Chron. 9: 1-3. There the writer is giving a list of those who had returned from Babylonian captivity and he says, "And in Jerusalem dwelt of the children of Judah, and of the children of Benjamin, and of the children of Ephraim and Manasseh." So according to this there were some among the ten tribes who joined with Benjamin and Judah and the Levites in their return to Jerusalem.

Whose spirit God had stirred to go up to build the house of Jehovah. Here we are told that God had stirred up the hearts of these people to return to Jerusalem. In verse 1 of our text it is said that Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus to make a proclamation to allow them to return. If the expression, "stirred up," does not mean a direct revelation in the hearts of all the people generally, we should not necessarily take the same term when used with reference to Cyrus to mean a direct revelation. No one contends that the term means it seems better to accept the term in a direct revelation in the case of the people generally here in verse 5, so it seems better to except the term in verse 1 to mean that God used his prophets as a means of stirring up the heart of Cyrus to make his proclamation.

Strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts. This is a report of the response to the suggestion of Cyrus that those who intended to stay in Babylon were to help their brethren financially and otherwise to effect their return to Jerusalem. This not only includes those Jews who wished to remain, but undoubtedly includes Babylonians who were sympathetic toward the Jews and who were inclined to make a contribution toward their return. And as God gave his people favor in the sight of the Egyptians when they were leaving Egypt, so he made them to be favorable in the eyes of the Babylonians, who made liberal contributions toward the expenses of their return and the building of the house of God in Jerusalem.

III. Cyrus Returns the Temple Vessels (Ezra 1: 7-11)

Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of Jehovah. These are said to be the vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem to place in the house of his god in Babylon. They are the vessels which Solomon had made and used in the temple in its various services and decorations. These vessels had been kept in charge by the treasurer of Babylonia, whose name is given as Mithredath. From this we would conclude that these Babylonians had taken rather good care to preserve the vessels taken from Jerusalem.

Numbered them unto Sheshbazzar. This is another name for Zerubbabel. In Ezra 3: 8 we learn that Zerubbabel was in charge of the work of building the house. Then in Ezra 5: 16 we read that Sheshbazzar laid the foundation to the house of God which is in Jerusalem. And then again in Zech. 4: 9 we read that the hands of Zerubbabel had laid the foundations of this house, so we conclude from this that Sheshbazzar was the Chaldean name for Zerubbabel.

The prince of Judah. This statement simply means that Zerubbabel was a descendant of David, who had a right to be on the throne of David if the Jews had their independence. So Zerubbabel was, by right of inheritance, the leader of his people and the overseer of this movement to return and rebuild Jerusalem.

And this is the number of them.

Ezra gives the number of the vessels which were returned by Cyrus. In verse 11 he says that all the vessels of gold and silver were five thousand and four hundred. But from the numbers given in verses 9 and 10 we learn that there were only twenty-four hundred and ninety-nine vessels listed, which leaves a difference of twenty-nine hundred and

one vessels to be accounted for. The apocryphal Esdras gives a list of these vessels, and the total as given there is five thousand four hundred sixty-nine. So it follows that either some items in the list of Esdras' account have been lost or that he did not intend to give the list in detail, but gave the sum total of all the vessels returned.

Relation to Our Aim

1. Persons to be remembered, (a) Cyrus. This man is to be remembered as the king who was pointed out by the prophet Isaiah as the shepherd of God's people who would rebuild Jerusalem. (b) Sheshbazzar. This is Zerubbabel, the descendant of David, whose right it was to rule the people of Israel in his time. He would have been king had Israel maintained their independence.

2. Facts to be remembered, (a) Isaiah prophesied of Cyrus as the king who would restore Israel to Jerusalem. This is another proof of the inspiration of the Bible. (b) The proclamation made by Cyrus is a matter of historical record and shows agreement with the Biblical account, thus strengthening our belief in the Bible as an inspired re-

cord (c) The return of the Jews to Jerusalem at the time set by prophets is another indication of the inspiration of the Bible.

3. Lessons to be remembered, (a) We are taught in this lesson that God has something to do with the affairs of the kingdoms of men, that he can set up rulers and remove them at his pleasure, (b) God can foresee events and then time his actions to agree with the things which he foreknows will happen. But the fact that God foresees these events does not mean that he predetermines them, and that the people involved are forced to play the part they do. (c) God can stir up the hearts of people to accomplish his purposes without those people being conscious of the fact that it is God's power moving them.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

Can you relate Nebuchadnezzar's dream about the great tree?

What was Daniel's interpretation of this dream?

What does Paul teach about God's hand in governmental affairs today?

What connection do our prayers have with God's intervention in affairs of government?

What did Isaiah prophesy concerning Cyrus?

What opportunity did Cyrus have to know of his prophecy?

How do you think God gave Cyrus his charge?

In what three ways is Cyrus a good example of men in government today?

Introduction

What change in the attitude of rulers made the return of the Jews possible?

How was this change in the attitude of rulers brought about?

What change was brought about in the people themselves?

Can you trace the sifting process which caused the returning exiles to be a deeply religious people?

Cyrus Proclaims a Return

What do you know of the early life of Cyrus?

When did the Persians have their first

contact with the Jews?

What did the Persians and the Jews have in common?

What did Jeremiah predict concerning the length of the captivity?

How did Jehovah stir the spirit of Cyrus?

What exaggerated statement did Cyrus make concerning the kingdoms God gave him?

How did Cyrus differ from all other Persian kings?

Did the proclamation of Cyrus include both Judah and Israel?

Did the prophets say anything about Israel returning from captivity?

Is there a possibility that some of the kingdom of Israel returned with these of the kingdom of Judah?

Do you know how many captives returned from Babylon?

Gifts from the People

What tribes are mentioned as helping the returning captives?

Do we have mention of any of the ten tribes taking part in the return?

How did God stir the hearts of his people to return?

What light does this throw on the manner in which God stirred the heart of Cyrus?

What is said of the response of the people to assist the returning captives?

Cyrus Returns the Temple Vessels

What evidence do we have that the Babylonians had taken good care of the temple vessels?

Can you identify Sheshbazzar?
What position did this man hold among the captives?
How many vessels did Cyrus return with the captives?

Relation To Our Aim

For what is Cyrus to be remembered?

For what is Zerubbabel to be remembered?
Do you remember what Isaiah said of Cyrus?
What facts in our lesson tend to strengthen our belief in the Bible as an inspired record?
What is there of interest to you in lessons to be remembered?

Lesson X—December 4, 1955

THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

Lesson Text

Ezra 4: 1-6; 6: 15-18

1 Now when the adversaries of Ju'-dah and Ben'-ja-min heard that the children of the captivity were building a temple unto Je'-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el;

2 Then they drew near to Ze-rub'-ba-bel, and to the heads of fathers' houses, and said unto them, Let us build with you; for we seek your God, as ye do; and we sacrifice unto him since the days of E'-sar-had'-don king of As-syr'-i-a, who brought us up hither.

3 But Ze-rub'-ba-bel, and Josh'-u-a, and the rest of the heads of fathers' houses of Is'-ra-el, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us in building a house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto Je'-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el, as king Cy'-rus the king of Per'-si-a hath commanded us.

4 Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Ju'-dah, and troubled them in building,

5 And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cy'-rus king of Per'-si-a,

even until the reign of Da-ri'-us king of Per'-si-a.

6 And in the reign of A-has-u-e'-rus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they an accusation against the inhabitants of Ju'-dah and Je-ru'-sa-lem.

15 And this house was finished on the third day of the month A'-dar, which was in the sixth year *it* the reign of Da-ri'-us the king.

16 And the children of Is'-ra-el, the priests and the Le'-vites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy.

17 And they offered at the dedication of this house of God a hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin-offering for all is'-ra-el, twelve he-goats, according to the number of the tribes of Is'-ra-el.

18 And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Le'-vites in their courses, for the service of God, which is at Je-ru'-sa-lem; as it is written in the book of Mo'-ses.

Golden Text.—“We ourselves together will build unto Jehovah, the God of Israel”(Ezra 4: 3.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Ezra 6: 1-5.

Daily Bible Readings

- November 28. M.Command to Rebuild the Temple (Hag. 1: 2-8)
- November 29. T.The Command Obeyed (Hag. 1: 12-15)
- November 30. W.Rebuilding the Temple (Ezra 3: 8-13)
- December 1. T.Completion of the Temple (Zech. 4: 6-10)
- December 2. F.The Glory of the Temple (Hag. 2: 1-9)
- December 3. S.Blessings of the Temple (Psalm 84: 1-12)
- December 4. S.House of the Lord (Psalm 122: 1-9)

TIME.—535 B. C. to 515 B. C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and their adversaries.

Golden Text Explained

1. The friendship of the world, (a) Often the friendship of the world comes after the time of our real

need. This was true, to some extent, of the offer made to Zerubbabel and his company to help rebuild the

temple. From Ezra 3: 8 we learn that this offer was not made until sometime in the second year after they had arrived in Jerusalem. When the returned Jews had gone far enough with the building program that the people of the land round about saw that they were going to succeed, they offered to have a part in their program of work. This same principle is seen in the life of the church in many communities. When the church is first established by a small, insignificant group of people, the community as a whole pays little attention to the effort that is being put forth; but when the group has struggled and sacrificed to the point where they can make somewhat of a showing in the way of numbers and a building in which to worship, the religious neighbors take notice of them and are willing to be classed as a "sister denomination" with them. As long as the church is small and weak and has no social or financial standing and backing, the well-to-do religious neighbors pay them no attention; but as soon as they are strong enough financially, numerically, and socially to demand attention, then the religious world would like to be friends, (b) Friendship of the world always comes on condition of concession. The adversaries of Zerubbabel claimed they worshiped the same God in sacrifices and offerings that Zerubbabel and his friends worshiped. But there was a difference in the worship which they offered and that which the Jews were content to offer. These adversaries did not profess to have been converted to the true way of worship, but implied that their way of worship should be accepted by Zerubbabel and his friends without criticism or objection. And so the religious world wishes to be neighbors with the church of the Lord after it has gained numerical, financial, and social strength. But its friendship is offered on the condition that the church of the Lord will accept the work and worship of these religious neighbors on a par with its own. It is true that they do not demand that we change our doctrine or our manner of worship, but it is also true that their friendship is extended on the condition that we do not demand any change in their doctrines or manner of worship. (c) Friendship of the world gives an appearance of outward

strength, but it is at the cost of inward weakness. If Zerubbabel and his friends had accepted the offer of these men, their numerical strength would have been increased. But it would have been at the expense of inward peace and unity. And so if the church of the Lord today makes concessions to the world to gain its friendship, they may appear stronger outwardly, but inwardly they will be weaker because of the loss of unity and harmony.

2. Refusal of the world's friendship,

(a) To refuse the offer of friendship from the world takes a discriminating mind. Zerubbabel and his friends had to determine the sincerity of the men who made this offer. And even if they were sincere, Zerubbabel and his helpers had to decide whether a sincere offer of their friendship would be worth while. And so there is need for discrimination and discernment in our relationship with the world about us today. It is possible for us to be such isolationists in the spiritual realm that we will even be offensive to sincere seekers after the truth. And yet we cannot adopt such fraternal policies as will cause us to compromise any principle of truth and righteousness. So in refusing the world's friendship we must use considerable discernment and discrimination, (b) Refusal of the world's friendship often takes courage. Because of our desire to enjoy that degree of friendship with the world about us, which is lawful, and because of the danger of losing that lawful friendship by refusing cooperation in matters of conscience and principle, it often takes genuine courage to turn down an offer of friendship, which a true Christian cannot afford to accept. And when we know that a refusal of the world's friendship will cause us to suffer persecution, it takes courage to turn it down, (c) Refusal of the world's friendship may arouse criticism within our own ranks. In most congregations, especially large ones, there is an uninformed element and a worldly element which are courting the friendship of the world. And when such an offer is rejected by the better informed and more faithful element, they are vociferous in their criticism, and sometimes congregations are torn asunder because the worldly element demands **more and more of the world's ways and principles.**

3. **Building: together.** (a) This statement in our text shows that Zerubbabel and his friends were determined to go their slow, hard way in building the city and the temple. Accepting the offer of assistance, made by the people round about, would have provided a quicker and easier way of doing the job. And those who are committed to the principle of getting by on doing as little as possible, would have accepted the offer. But the quick and easy way is not always the best way to get things done. Our Lord could have had dominion over the kingdoms of the world the quick and easy way if he had been willing to fall down and worship Satan, but he preferred to go the long hard way of the cross,

and none of us criticize him for so doing. (b) Zerubbabel and his friends were willing to pay the cost of purity. When we accept the world's offer of friendship today, we do so at the loss of purity in morals and spirituality. If we reject the offer of the world's friendship, we manifest a willingness to pay whatever purity and unity costs. (c) Cooperation under God can do all God expects us to do. Zerubbabel said, "We ourselves together will build." This statement implies cooperation. A small congregation will not be able to accomplish as much as a large congregation, all things being equal, but God does not expect the small congregation to accomplish as much as a large congregation.

Introduction

After the company reached Jerusalem, some time was used in preparing temporary quarters in which the people could live. Actual work on the temple did not begin until sometime in the second year. But one of the first things to be done was the building of an altar for burnt offerings. "And they set the altar upon its base; for fear was upon them because of the peoples of the countries: and they offered burnt-offerings thereon unto Jehovah, even burnt-offerings morning and evening." The religious fervor and zeal of these people are demonstrated in the fact that as soon as possible they erected their altar so that the worship of God might be carried on. "As it is written in the law of Moses the man of God." (Ezra 3: 2.) Incidentally, this shows that the people of Ezra's time regarded Moses as the author of the Pentateuch. Modern skeptics deny that Moses wrote the first five books of the Old Testament.

The second thing of interest is that in the seventh month these people kept the feast of tabernacles. From the eighth chapter of Nehemiah we learn that the Jews did not keep this feast while they were in captivity, nor for a good many years prior to that time. But this group which returned to Jerusalem was a group of God-fearing people who wanted to do all that God expected them to do. Another thing of interest, by way of introduction, is the fact that when the foundation for the new temple was laid, they sang praises and thanksgiving unto Jehovah. But while the young people were happy and grateful, some of the old men, who had seen the house which Solomon built, were weeping with a loud voice. These old men could remember the size and grandeur of the temple Solomon built, and it so far exceeded this temple now in building that they could not refrain from weeping.

Exposition of the Text

I. An Offer Assistance Refused (Ezra 4: 1-3)

When the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard. Whether Zerubbabel recognized these men for what they were at their first appearance, or whether the writer speaks of them according to what they turned out to be, we have no way of knowing. It is certain that these men appeared, at least, to be friends and sought to have a part in the work on the basis of friendship. This verse says that these people round about Jerusalem had heard that the "chil-

dren of the captivity" were building a temple unto the God of Israel. So they had some knowledge of the true God. When the kingdom of Israel was carried into Assyrian captivity, people of other nations were brought into Israel to take the place of the Jews. Since the land was not thickly settled, wild beasts multiplied until the people thought that the god of the country had sent them as an indication of his displeasure. So they requested the king of Assyria to send them a priest of Israel to teach them how they should fear Jehovah.

"Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt . . . They feared Jehovah, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away." (2 Kings 17: 29, 33.)

Let us build with you; for we seek your God, as ye do. They asked the privilege of working with Zerubbabel and his people on the basis that they were both seeking and worshiping the same God. They could have been perfectly sincere in this request and in the reason which they gave. There are people today who know so little about the elements of scriptural worship that they make the same mistake that these Samaritans made. They want the people of God to enter into "union meeting" with them and give as their reason that we both worship the same God, that we both want to go to heaven. These Samaritans worshiped the same God that Zerubbabel worshiped, but in addition they worshiped the gods of their native lands. They evidently did not realize that an act of worship to their native deities would render their worship to God abominable. So people today sing and pray to God, the same God to which the church of the Lord sings and prays, and they cannot seem to understand why their worship is not just as acceptable as the worship of the people of God. But in addition to the fact that they sing and pray, they do a lot of things which God has never commanded and with which God is not pleased. They fail to realize that the doing of these things authorized by human tradition makes their acts of singing and praying an abomination unto God. Lest someone should think that statement too strong, we listen to Amos, speaking for God, saying: "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer me your burnt-offerings and meal-offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." (Amos 5: 21-24.) God had commanded the feasts

which they were keeping. He had demanded the burnt-offerings and the meal-offerings, and, according to Psalm 150, he had commanded the melody of their instruments, but he says that he hated these things and would take no delight in them. Why would Jehovah hate the doing of that which he had commanded? It was obviously because they were doing other things which were contrary to his commandments. The Jews of the time of our Lord made their offerings and said their prayers. Yet Jesus said that their worship was vain because, in addition to these things, they also washed their hands as an act of worship and other things based on the traditions of men.

Ye have nothing to do with us in building a house unto our God. This was the answer of Zerubbabel and his people to the proposition of these Samaritans to assist them in rebuilding the temple. Whether Zerubbabel was given power to detect insincerity in the proposition or whether he was led to exercise his own good judgment, we have no way of knowing. But from what we learn later of these men, his decision was wise. To have accepted their proposition would have been to invite disension and the pressure of compromise. Undoubtedly Zerubbabel knew of the impurity of their worship and did not care to have his people exposed to it.

II. Professing Friends Show Their Enmity (Ezra 4: 4-6)

Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah. The term, "strengthen their hands," in Ezra 6: 22, means to encourage and assist in the work, so the term here, "weakened the hands," means to discourage and hinder the work. So these people who wanted to be friends on their own terms, when refused the opportunity, could be the most troublesome sort of enemies.

And hired counselors against them, to frustrate their purpose. So set were they in their determination to trouble the building of the temple that they hired counselors, or lawyers, to represent them in Babylon, to render the decree of Cyrus ineffective. And in the days of successor to Cyrus, they were able to gather enough strength and influence to get a restraining order from Baby-

Ion to stop the work entirely. (Ezra 4:7-24.)

All the days of Cyrus . . . until the reign of Darius. This was a period of about eight or nine years through which they kept up this opposition to the work on the temple. They not only did what they could in Palestine to hinder the work, but they kept these hired counselors in Babylon all this time. It is interesting to note how some people can change their minds. When these people wished to have a part in the building of the temple, they thought it was a fine thing to do. They were willing to put in time, effort, and money in the building of this temple, if they could only hold to their religious practices. But when they were denied the privilege of building and using this temple, they immediately looked upon it as a very evil and dangerous thing. Furthermore, these Samaritans thought that Zerubbabel and his friends were good people, good enough for them to worship with, until Zerubbabel refused to grant their request. And immediately upon this refusal they changed their mind about Zerubbabel and his people and thought that they were dangerous and unfit to be engaged in such a work. Two excerpts from the letter which they wrote the king in Babylon will show how they changed their minds with reference to the people and the program of building in which they were engaged. "Be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls finished, they will not pay tribute, custom, or toll, and in the end it will be hurtful to the kings. . . . So shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city is a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time; for which cause was this city laid waste." (Ezra 4: 13, 15.) Human nature does not change. And each one of us should watch himself closely lest he allow his own fancies and his eyes to determine what he thinks about other people.

Until the reign of Darius king of Persia. It should be remembered that this Darius is called king of Persia while a Darius, of which we studied in former lessons, was the king of Media.

And in the reign of Ahasuerus. It was in the beginning of the reign of this man that these enemies of Zer-

ubbabel wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. Some take this Ahasuerus to be the one mentioned in the book of Esther, but this seems to be a mistake. In verse 5 we are told that the opposition of these people continued from the days of Cyrus until the reign of Darius. Then two kings are mentioned as reigning between the time of Cyrus and Darius. One is Ahasuerus, who is without doubt Cambyses of profane history. The other, in verse 7, is called Artaxerxes, and since a usurper known as Pseudo-Smerdis is known to have reigned for eight months at about this time, we conclude that this Artaxerxes was this Pseudo-Smerdis.

III. The Temple Is Completed (Ezra 6: 13-16)

Then Tattenai the governor beyond the River. Under the influence of Haggai and Zechariah, prophets of God, the work on the temple was resumed in the second year of the reign of Darius, about 520 B. C. Then this Tattenai and his associates asked the Jews who gave them authority to build. And they replied that Cyrus, in the first year of his reign, not only gave them authority to build, but he gave them material assistance. Then this Tattenai and his associates wrote a letter to Darius, the king, and asked that search be made in the king's treasure house to see if Cyrus made any such decree. Darius made the search, found the decree of Cyrus, and wrote Tattenai and his associates as follows. "Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in its place." (Ezra 6: 7.) And the letter continues that not only were they to allow the Jews to build this house, but that they were to render material assistance, and our text says that these governors "did accordingly with all diligence." It seems that these men were acting in good faith, and when they found that the king was willing for the work to proceed, they were willing to render what assistance they were able to render.

The elders of the Jews builded and prospered. It is said that this building and prosperity, or success in their building program, was to be attributed to the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah. Haggai accused the Jews of being selfish and of working on their own houses in preference

to the house of God. (Hag. 1: 7-11.)

And this house was finished. Ezra tells us that the house was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. Ezra tells us that the house was started in the second year of the reign of Cyrus, which was 536 B.C. And now we

learn that the house was finished in the sixth year of Darius, which was 515 or 516 B.C. Hence, the building of this temple required about twenty years. However, during about half of that time the people were completely stopped, and much of the balance of the time they were hindered by their enemies.

Relation to Our Aim

1. Persons, (a) Zerubbabel. We remember this man because of his position of leadership among the returning captives. He was the son of David, who would have been king if the people had been independent,

(b) Darius. This is not the Darius who put his friend Daniel in the lion's den, but a later king of Persia who was friendly toward the building of the temple and made its completion possible.

2. Lessons to be remembered, (a) It is better to be few in number and poor in this world's goods than to

compromise principle in order to gain numbers, and wealth, and popularity.

(b) Some people will put more money, time, and effort, in opposing a work which they cannot control than they would put into it if they were allowed to have a part in the work.

(c) The preaching of two men of God, Haggai and Zechariah, gave the zeal and enthusiasm needed for finishing the temple. This is a real tribute to the influence of the preacher and to the power of the preached word.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

When did the people around Jerusalem offer to help build the temple?

Can you show that this same principle is true with reference to the church and its friends today?

On what condition does the friendship of the world usually come?

On what condition does the denominational world offer its friendship today?

Does the friendship of the world add to the strength of the church?

Is a discriminating mind necessary to consider the offer of friendship?

Why does the refusal of friendship of the world take courage?

Is there danger of criticism in refusing the offer of friendship of the world?

In what way were the Jews like Jesus in determining the way they would accomplish their purposes?

What price were they willing to pay in order to build as God desired?

What is implied in our text about cooperation and what is the value of it?

Introduction

How much time was required to furnish temporary quarters for the people in Jerusalem?

What was the first public act on the part of the people?

What evidence do we have that Ezra and his people regarded Moses as the author of the Pentateuch?

What feasts did these people keep in the seventh month?

How did the old men feel about the new temple being built?

An Offer of Assistance Refused

What evidence do we have that the people living around Jerusalem had a knowledge of a true God?

How did Zerubbabel know they were insincere in their offer of assistance?

How was the knowledge of the true God perpetuated to any extent among the Samaritans?

On what basis did these Samaritans ask the privilege of working with Zerubbabel?

On what ground could Zerubbabel object to the worship which these Samaritans offered to Jehovah?

Can you make an application of this principle with reference to much of the worship offered to God today?

Why was Zerubbabel's decision to reject their offer a wise one?

Professing Friends Show Their Enmity

What is meant by weakening the hands of men?

How did these Samaritans attempt to make the decree of Cyrus ineffective?

What effect did their opposition have on the work of the temple?

How did the Samaritans change their minds with reference to Zerubbabel and his brethren?

Is that a common failing with humanity today?

About how long was work on the temple stopped?

What do you know of king Ahasuerus of this lesson?

The Temple Is Completed

What prophets of God assisted in the completion of the temple?

What opposition did the people encounter at this time?

What order did King Darius give concerning work on the temple?

In what year was the temple completed?

How many years were required to build the temple?

Relation To Our Aim

For what is Zerubbabel to be remembered?

For what is Darius to be remembered?

What is there of interest to you in lessons to be remembered?

Lesson XI—December 11, 1955

NEHEMIAH VISITS JERUSALEM

Lesson Text

Neh. 2: 11-20

11 So I came to Je-ru'-sa-lem, and was there three days.

12 And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God put into my heart to do for Je-ru'-sa-lem; neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon.

13 And I went out by night by the valley gate, even toward the jackal's well, and to the dung gate, and viewed the walls of Je-ru'-sa-lem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire.

14 Then I went on to the fountain gate and to the king's pool: but there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass.

15 Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall; and I turned back, and entered by the valley gate, and so returned.

16 And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work.

17 Then said I unto them, Ye see the evil case that we are in, how Je-ru'-sa-lem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Je-ru'-sa-lem, that we be no more a reproach.

18 And I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me, as also of the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for the good work.

19 But when San-bal'-lat the Hor'-o-nite, and Tô-bi'-ah the servant, the Am'-mon-ite, and Ge'-shem the A-ra'-bi-an, heard it, they laughed as to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?

20 Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we Ms servants will arise and build; but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Je-ru'-sa-lem.

Golden Text.—"The hand of our God is upon all them that seek him, for good" (Ezra 8: 22.)

Devotional Reading.—Neh. 2: 1-8.

Daily Bible Readings

- December 5 M..... Nehemiah Hears of Jerusalem's Shame (Neh. 1: 1-3)
- December 6 T..... Nehemiah Prays for Jerusalem (Neh. 1: 4-11)
- December 7 W.Workers Organized (Neh. 3: 1-5)
- December 8 T..... Prominent Men Active in Work (Neh. 3: 6-14)
- December 9 F..... Levites Do Their Part (Neh. 3: 15-27)
- December 10 S..... Priests Work with Others (Neh. 3: 28-32)
- December 11 S.The Work Opposed (Neh. 4: 1-14)

Time.—445 B. C.

Place.—Jerusalem.

Persons.—Nehemiah, Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem.

Golden Text Explained

1. An example of trust. Our text is taken from the experiences of Ezra, about twelve years before the time Nehemiah went to Jerusalem. Ezra had gathered a group of captives on the river Ahava with the intention of taking them with him to Jerusalem. Not only were these people carrying along all their worldly possessions, but the king and other people of the country had made

contributions in gold and silver which Ezra was taking back with him. The gold and silver alone amounted to about four million dollars in our money, if our way of valuing their talents is correct. And added to this they had many valuable vessels. This would have made a prize catch for Arab chiefs along the desert road which Ezra traveled. And ordinarily the king would have given

them a military escort, as he did in the case of other groups going on such a journey. Then implication is that the king suggested such and escort, and Ezra refused it. He told the king that Jehovah would take care of them. After telling the king this, he said he was ashamed to ask for an escort, or allow the king to provide one for the journey. If, after telling the king that Jehovah would take care of them, he asked for military aid, he would be showing the king that he did not have enough trust in God to keep his word. So Ezra was willing to put all these people and their wealth into the hands of God and trust him to see they got through safely. This is a fine example of trusting God with life and property. David teaches us a lesson against putting trust in our own wealth, since none of us can redeem our brother. (Psa. 49: 6.) Solomon says we are fools to trust our own heart. (Prov. 28: 26.) A curse is put upon all who put their trust in man and the arm of flesh to save them. (Jer. 17: 5.) And Jeremiah reproves Moab for trusting their works and treasures. (Jer. 48: 7.) Ezra had learned to put his trust in Jehovah to an extent which was unusual in his day.

2. **An example of honoring Jehovah.** Not only did Ezra set a fine example of trust, and prove to the king and all the people who had held them in captivity that they were serving a God who was worthy to be trusted for protection, but he honored Jehovah in an unusual way before an idolatrous nation of people. Undoubtedly this act of trust on the part of Ezra and his people gave the people of Babylonia a new conception of the God whom Ezra worshipped. Moses mentioned something like this in one of his petitions to Jehovah in behalf of a disobedient people. (Num. 14: 13ff.) The people

had listened to the report of the unfaithful spies who had returned from Canaan, and they murmured against Jehovah and wished they had died in Egypt; and they threatened to organize a rebellion to return to Egypt. Then Jehovah told Moses he would destroy the people and make a greater nation of Moses. But Moses prayed the Lord not to do such, for the nations around would hear that Jehovah had tried to move his people from Egypt to Canaan and was unable to do so. It would not be good for the honor of Jehovah to destroy the people, said Moses. And so Ezra was concerned for the honor of Jehovah on the occasion of our text. He thought it would not be good for the honor of Jehovah if a military escort was used. That would be a reflection on the power of Jehovah; a reflection on his ability to care for his people.

3. God honors such faith. When God's people express or manifest faith and trust in an unusual degree, it is pleasing to Jehovah. If Ezra had told the king that he and his people had enough arms to fight their own battles; if he had said they had enough money to buy off any Arab chieftain who might attack them; if he had shown that his trust was in the arm of flesh, Jehovah would have been displeased and would have allowed them to suffer to learn their lesson. But since they manifested such trust in him, he would not allow it to go unrewarded. We are not told the details of the incident, but we do know that "the enemy and the liar-in-wait by the way" were encountered, and that Jehovah delivered his people from them. (Ezra 8: 31.) We must not foolishly tempt the Lord to take care of us, as Satan would have Jesus do (Matt. 4: 6, 7), but when we place our lives in his hand with full confidence that he will care for us, we will never be disappointed.

Introduction

We have seen that the captivity of both Israel and Judah was not completed at a single raid of the captor upon the captives. At least three separate raids were made on both nations. So the return was not in one single mass movement, but in three separate groups, (a) Zerubbabel led the first group with the intention of restoring the city and the temple, (b) Ezra led back the

second group, and his special work was to restore the law to its rightful place among the people, (c) Nehemiah was the third to return, and his purpose was to rebuild the wall about the city and to accomplish certain reforms. Though he seems to have made no effort to organize a mass return of captives, through his influence Jerusalem was built up, and his rule as governor

for about thirteen years was productive of much improvement socially, financially, politically, and spiritually.

Nehemiah was a member of the tribe of Judah; his father's name was Hacaliah. He was cupbearer to king Artaxerxes Longimanus, whose capital was Shushan, instead of Babylon. Cupbearers were men of influence in eastern courts. They not only served drinks and food to their kings, but they were often counselors and companions. Nehemiah must have been very close to Artaxerxes, for when Nehemiah had fasted and prayed for some time the king noticed that his countenance was not as bright and joyful as usual and, instead of reproving him, inquired as to the cause of his sadness. In this connection we have a very unusual thing, and yet it is one we are not surprised to find in this man of God. He says that when the king asked him what he wished to-

do about the situation in Jerusalem he had described, he prayed to the God of heaven before he made reply to the king's question. We are not to conclude that he excused himself from the king and went into his separate room for a period of prayer. The flow of the story implied that he gave the king an immediate reply. But in that moment between the question and the reply he sent a request to Jehovah for wisdom to say the right thing in the right way to get the assistance of the king to accomplish the work so badly needed in Jerusalem. In this he set for us all a fine example of asking God's help in the affairs of everyday life, and especially those upon which the honor and glory of God depend. Then Nehemiah made known to the king what he wanted in the way of assistance, asking especially for letters of introduction to the governors along the way and for timber needed on his work.

Exposition of the Text

I. Survey Of Conditions By Night (Neh. 2: 11-16)

So I came to Jerusalem. Though Ezra did not allow the king to give him a military escort, we see that Nehemiah accepted such in his journey across the desert. (Verse 9.) He says he stayed in Jerusalem three days before he started his work. Ezra took such a period for rest and to become acquainted with conditions before he started to do the work before him. (Ezra 8: 32.)

And I arose in the night. Nehemiah did not tell any one the reason why he had come to Jerusalem, nor that the king had given him authority in Judea that exceeded the authority of any of those then ruling the people. And he says he took only a few men with him on this night journey around the walls of the city. He did not wish to let the enemy learn his purposes, and he did not know whom he could trust, so he simply said nothing to any man.

What my God put into my heart. We often read of God putting things into the hearts of people, and one time at least we read of Satan filling people's heart. (Acts 5: 3.) It is not necessary for us to conclude that God directly and miraculously put an idea into Nehemiah's heart. His brother had been to Jerusalem and had returned to Shushan and told

Nehemiah of the pitiful conditions of the city. He had thought about those conditions and had prayed to God to direct him to do what he should about it. So through reports, meditation, and prayer Nehemiah had reached the conclusion that he should do something to help the people of Jerusalem. Undoubtedly, this is the way God put it into his heart to render assistance. Surely God still moves people to do things today and if an inspired record of our activities were written, we would find that many people were moved by the Lord to do certain things; That God put it into their hearts to do them.

I went out by night by the valley gate. Nehemiah gives a very brief description of his journey around the city. He mentions several gates,, and the mention of these helps us to follow his steps as he inspects the condition of the walls of the city. However, there is some difference of opinion as to the gate by which he left the city and by which he entered when he had finished his circuit of the city. It is called the "valley gate." Adam Clarke thinks this is the gate which leads into the brook of Kidron, but others seem to agree that it is the gate which leads into the valley of Hinnom. Hinnom comes from the west and makes its first close contact with the city near the gate of Ephraim, where it turns

southward and flows down the western side of the city and around the southern side and joins with the valley through which the brook Kidron flows at the very southeastern tip of the city. Hence, Hinnom flows around nearly half of the city.

And to the dung gate. This gate was northeast of the valley gate, showing that when Nehemiah went out of the city he turned eastward. The next gate he mentions is the fountain gate, and this is very near the dung gate, but eastward, showing that he went out at the south and turned eastward and then to the north.

Then up I went . . . by the brook. This refers to the brook of Kidron, which flows all along the eastern side of Jerusalem, between the city and the Mount of Olives. Then he says he turned back and entered by the valley gate. But since he turned back, we conclude that he turned westward along the northern wall and then down the western wall until he came to the valley gate on the southwest, where he left the city. In this way he made a complete circuit of the city and got an opportunity to see the condition of all the walls.

The rulers knew not whither I went. Since he makes mention of rulers of Jerusalem, we conclude that there was no one man in charge of affairs in the city at the time Nehemiah came. It seems that he had not made known to these rulers the commission the king had given him, and certainly that he had not told them his intentions with reference to the city. If he had not told them about the commission he had from the king, he certainly had their confidence that they would allow him to make a circuit of the city by night.

II. Nehemiah's Report and Their Response (Neh. 2: 17, 18)

Ye see the evil case that we are in. Nehemiah called attention of the people to the ugly situation or predicament they were in by showing them that Jerusalem was in waste and the gates had been burned. In the first place this suggested to their enemies their weakness and invited them to attack. If the people were strong enough to resist an attack, they would surely be strong enough to rebuild the walls and the gates. In the next place it occurred to Nehemiah that such a condition was a

reflection on Jehovah. The condition of the city and the walls seemed to say that their God was not strong enough to rebuild the city, which the Babylonians under their heathen gods had destroyed. This might suggest to some of us that the condition of our houses of worship cast an evil reflection on the God we worship. Some congregations are not able to build fine houses, and such are not necessary for our worship to be acceptable to God; but we can keep our places of worship clean and in good state of repair. To fail to do so is to misrepresent the God we worship in the community.

That we be no more a reproach. This means rather that we not allow this reproachful condition to continue any longer. His remedy was to build the walls to take away the reproach. Their present condition proclaimed either a weak or a careless people; a people who were too weak to build, or a people who did not care enough for their God or have enough self-respect to repair the ruins around them.

I told them of the hand of my God. He related how God had been with him in answer to his prayer for help and guidance. This was calculated to stir interest in the work and hope that, when started, it could be finished, for if God was with them, they could do whatever they started.

As also of the king's words. This seems to have been the time when Nehemiah revealed the fact that he had been appointed governor of the province with authority to carry out the king's will. No doubt he also told of the cooperation of the governors of the other provinces around them who had been instructed by the king to render assistance. He would leave nothing unsaid in this rousing speech which would tend to enlist the interest and support of the people whom he addressed.

They said, Let us rise up and build. We are not told who the audience was, but it is implied that this speech was made to a public gathering of the people in Jerusalem. Nehemiah realized that, if his mission was successful, he would have to carry all the people with him. He knew he would have to create a wave of enthusiasm which would move all the people to do their part. Undoubtedly he knew that whatever was done would have to be done

quickly for at least two reasons. First, the people would respond quickly, but they had a record of cooling off quickly in their enthusiasm. And next, the enemies had to be taken into consideration. The work had to be done before they would have time to get organized too well. Hence we may be sure that this address was before a public gathering in Jerusalem, and that Nehemiah succeeded in arousing the great majority of the people to concerted action for a quick dash to victory.

They strengthened their hands for the good work. To strengthen one's hands for a work simply means to resolve with firm determination to do that work. There is no word in the Hebrew for "work," as shown by the italics, so really it is said they determined to do good. They decided to stand on the right side of the proposition Nehemiah discussed with them. No one ever stands for good without intending to do so. We never stand for right by accident. We first learn what is right; then we resolve to do the right; and then we set ourselves to the task.

III. Enemies Ridicule Their Efforts (Neh. 2: 19, 20)

When Sanballat the Horonite. This man is not mentioned in any other book in the Bible, so we have very little information on him. Clarke refers to him as a governor of Samaria, but more likely he was not that important, having only some civil or military position under Artaxerxes. There is uncertainty as to the meaning of *Horonite*. Some say it means he was a citizen of Beth-Horon, in the hill-country of Ephraim, and so a Samaritan by birth. Others say the word suggests he was a native of Horonaim, a city of Moab. Since he was associated with an Ammonite and an Arabian in his opposition to Nehemiah, this may be the meaning of the term.

Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite. In Gen. 19: 35-38 we have a record of the start of the nations of Moab and Ammon. When the children of Israel were going toward Canaan, these nations refused to assist them, and Jehovah said they should never come into the assembly of God's people, and that the Jews would never seek their peace and prosperity. (Deut. 23: 3-6.) Tobiah formed some kind of alliance with the priest,

Eliashib, and Nehemiah had to read the law to them to get him removed from his office in the chamber of the house of God. (Neh. 13: 4ff.) And the daughter of Sanballat married the grandson of this same priest. (Neh. 13: 28.) So we see that these men not only tried to intimidate the Jews, but worked their way into the social and governmental life of the the Jews.

Geshem the Arabian. This man seems not to have been as prominent in the affairs of Nehemiah as the other two men. Since the Jews held themselves aloof from the Arabians as well as from the Moabites and the Ammonites, he would resent any progress or any success they might have, so would lend himself to any scheme to prevent their successes.

They laughed us to scorn. Their first attack was that of ridicule. Their next step was that of intimidation by suggesting that these Jews were rebelling against Artaxerxes the king. No doubt this implied a threat to accuse them unto the king as had been done several years before when the work on the temple was stopped. (Ezra 4: 23, 24.) It seems that Nehemiah did not inform them that he had permission, much less the assistance, of Artaxerxes to do the work he was doing. They had no right to know, so he let them go on in their ignorance.

The God of heaven, he will prosper us. Nehemiah was not relying on the help of men; he was looking to Jehovah for help. He had every assurance that Jehovah had been with him in all he had done thus far and believed he would continue to prosper him in all he did which was according to the will of God. Knowing that one is right and having faith in God to prosper the doing of right and protect those engaged in the right can give a wonderful brand of courage.

Ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial. Not being members of either of the twelve tribes of Israel, these men had no portion, no inheritance, in Jerusalem; they had no right, or authority, to give any direction to the work being done; and they had no place in the remembrance of the people of that city. Hence, their offers of assistance were rejected, and their demands for a place in the worship in the temple went unheeded. When a line is to be

drawn between right and wrong, and when people must take a stand on one side and be counted, it takes a brand of courage many people do not have. Nehemiah had a plen-

tiful supply, as did Ezra and Zerubabel, of that kind of courage, and for that reason were selected by Jehovah to lead his people in these dangerous periods.

Relation to Our Aim

1. Persons to be remembered, (a) Nehemiah is to be remembered for his love for Jerusalem and his efforts to rebuild the wall and organize a government which would be able to stand against strong enemies on all sides. (b) Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem will be remembered as enemies of the people of God who would resort to ridicule, intimidation, and fifth-column tactics to carry their point.

2. Lessons to be remembered, (a) Nehemiah knew the value of keeping quiet until the right time to talk. Some of us never know anything more than others, because we never

can keep from telling everything we know as fast as we learn it. (b) When Nehemiah told the people of Jerusalem the authority on which he had come and on which he acted among them, he put God first and the king second. And when he answered the threats of his enemies, he put his trust in Jehovah first. These lessons are written for our learning, that we may learn to put our trust in Jehovah rather than in men. (c) It is a fearful thing to be the enemy of God's people, because no one can oppose them without at the same time opposing God himself.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?
Repeat the golden text from memory.
Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

Can you give the setting of our golden text?
How much gold and silver did the people have with them?
What does David say about putting our trust in wealth?
What does Solomon call the man who trusts in his own heart?
How does Ezra's actions set us an example of honoring Jehovah?
How did Moses honor Jehovah in a way similar to this?
What evidence do we have that Ezra and his people were in danger en route to Jerusalem?
Was Ezra's action such as would unnecessarily put God on trial?

Introduction

Name three great men who took part in leading the people back to Jerusalem.
For what work was each man noted in particular?
What do you know of Nehemiah as to family, government position, and spirituality?
How did the king respond to Nehemiah's request of him?

Survey of Conditions By Night

In what way did Nehemiah's return journey differ from that of Ezra?
To what extent did Nehemiah do his work in secrecy?
How did God put it into the heart of Nehemiah to do this work?
Does God put things into our hearts today in much the same way?
How many gates to Jerusalem can you name and locate?

What two valleys were near Jerusalem, and where were they located?

What do you know of the government of Jerusalem before Nehemiah's arrival?

Nehemiah's Report to the People And Their Response

Can you describe the condition of Jerusalem as Nehemiah found it?
What would these conditions suggest to their enemies?
How did these conditions reflect upon their God?
How can we cast poor reflections on God today in a similar manner?
What backing did Nehemiah tell the people he had in this work?
How did the people respond to his appeal?
Why did Nehemiah think his work should be done quickly?
What is meant by strengthening their hands for the work?

Enemies Ridicule Their Efforts

What do you know of Sanballat?
What do you know of Tobiah?
What law of God kept them out of the assembly of God's people?
How did these men violate this law?
What do you know of Geshem?
What was their first method of attack?
To what did they resort next?
On whom did Nehemiah say he would rely for help against these men?
What is meant by their having no portion, no right, no memorial?

Relation To Our Aim

For what is Nehemiah to be remembered?
For what are Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem to be remembered?
State and discuss the lessons to be remembered.

Lesson XII—December 18, 1955

NEHEMIAH REBUILDS THE WALL OF JERUSALEM

Lesson Text

Neh. 4: 6, 15-23

6 So we built the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto half the height thereof: for the people had a mind to work.

15 And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work.

16 And it came to pass from that time forth, that half of my servants wrought in the work, and half of them held the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the coats of mail; and the rulers were behind all the house of Ju'-dah.

17 They that builded the wall and they that bare burdens laded themselves; every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other held his weapon;

18 And the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so

builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me.

19 And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another:

20 In what place soever ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us; our God will fight for us.

21 So we wrought in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared.

22 Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Je-ru'-salem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and may labor in the day.

23 So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard that followed me, none of us put off our clothes, every one went with his weapon to the water.

Golden Text.—"The people had a mind to work" (Neh. 4: 6.)

Devotional Reading.—Neh. 3: 28-32.

Daily Bible Readings

December 12. M.....	The People Pray Together (Neh. 4: 7-14)
December 13. T.....	The People Build Together (Neh. 4: 15-23)
December 14. W.....	The People Work Together (Neh. 6: 15-19)
December 15. T.....	The People Are Exhorted (Neh. 2: 17-20)
December 16. F.....	The People Are Divided for Speed (Neh. 3: 13-27)
December 17. S.....	Worshipping Together (Psalm 95: 1-11)
December 18. S.....	Rejoicing Together (Psalm 85: 1-13)

Time.—445 B. C.

Place.—Jerusalem.

Persons.—Nehemiah and the people.

Golden Text Explained

1. The mind of the people. This mind to work is said to have been with the people, not the leaders. By this, of course, we do not mean that the leaders did not have the same mind; but Nehemiah wants us to understand that it was the people who had this mind to work, and that the unusual accomplishments were due to the fact that all the people had this mind to work, (a) Interest and enthusiasm are catching. Leaders can inspire and urge people on to greater activity, and the

leaders will serve to encourage the people. But until some of the people following begin to "catch on" with interest, there is little the leaders can do. When once some of the people respond to the leadership, their interest will inspire others, and soon all are active, (b) Cooperation is possible only where all the people are on fire with enthusiasm. Cooperation is operation on the part of all, in the same direction, for the same purpose. So if all the people in a group do not have a mind

to work, there can be no cooperation on the part of all. Cooperation means unity of purpose and action, so all the people must have the same purpose in mind and be trying to attain the same objective. Two horses cannot pull a pound of feathers if they are pulling in opposite directions; neither can a church accomplish anything, regardless of how much activity there is in it, if they are all pulling in opposite directions to one another,

(c) This mind to work together is born of good leadership. Nehemiah got his facts all together by making a close survey of conditions and then calling a public meeting to arouse the people to a sense of their need, and to make them realize the condition of the city was not only dangerous to them, but a reproach to God. He knew the right appeal and the right approach to get people to respond. People usually respond when leaders are wise and understanding.

2. This mind to work comes from:

(a) Feeling the need for a certain work to be done. A wise leadership in the church will take the people into their confidence and make them realize the need of doing definite things. These proposed works will be explained to the people and their interest kindled and inflamed in those projects by acquainting them with the conditions which make the works needed. Leaders cannot just say to people that a certain work needs to be done, and you can take our word for the need; until they are given the facts, they will not feel the need and will not likely respond, (b) People must be made to feel that doing a certain work is doing a service to God. When Nehemiah made the people see that the condition of Jerusalem was a reproach to God, they were ready to do something to improve conditions. So wise leaders in the church will impress people with the fact that here is something which needs to be done, and that in the doing of this work we will be serving God. (c) People must be made to feel that by doing

a certain piece of work others will receive some benefit. Not many people wish to put time and effort and money into a piece of work which will be of no profit to anybody. We are too practical-minded to waste precious time and energy. People who are like Jesus get happiness out of doing things for others, so when there is something to do which will benefit others, they will work,

(d) Having a streak of selfishness, we will be more willing to work if we know that we can derive some personal benefit from our labors. This is no sin unless we allow this self-interest to dominate us. So a wise leadership will see that people know that the doing of church work will in the end prove beneficial to us.

3. **Blessings to be derived from a mind to work,** (a) When people work together, they get acquainted with each other and love one another more. We are not together enough these days to know each other as brethren should, and so do not love as we are taught brethren should love one another. The church that is busy at work, doing things which bring the membership into personal contact, will develop Christian love. We see this demonstrated in a small group which has to do most, or all, of the work to build a place of worship. The men do the work, and the women serve supper on the ground. They are knit together in the bonds of brotherly love to a degree they would never have known if they had paid a contractor to put up the building. (b) Such work together blesses a church with a degree of peace and unity it cannot know otherwise. Love will give people peace and unity, and love comes from working together, (c) Work contributes to our spiritual growth. The Lord has arranged matters so that the worker grows spiritually, and the indifferent and lazy man dies spiritually. This does not agree with the idea that our eternal happiness does not depend on our work, nor does the Bible teach such a doctrine. We do not pay for our salvation, but salvation comes to those who work.

Introduction

The third chapter of Nehemiah tells how the workers were organized and distributed to the various sections of the city for work on the wall around the city. Nehemiah was strong for organization of his forces.

Many congregations suffer from a lack of such organization as is necessary to give every one something to do, some responsibility for something definite in the work of the church. Then in the first half of the fourth

chapter we are told of the attitude and actions of their enemies. At first they resorted to sarcasm and ridicule. Sanballat attempted to ridicule them in a speech which he made before his army. Tobiah, perhaps at the same gathering, said that Nehemiah and his helpers were not able to build anything which a fox could not tear down by walking on it. But Nehemiah and his associates were not hurt by such reactions on the part of their enemies. And their enemies, seeing that the work continued, began to threaten actual warfare to stop the work. However, there were some Jews living some distance from Jerusalem, and they were able to get word of the plans of these Samaritans and keep Nehemiah informed as to their intentions and activities. With

this inside information, Nehemiah was able to arrange his forces which could both work and fight at those sections where such men were needed. Nehemiah's appeal to his brethren was calculated to arouse their zeal for God and their patriotism for their homes and families. He said, "Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, who is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses." Without such zealous and sympathetic leadership as given by Nehemiah, the work of building the wall could not have been done by the Jews in that generation. We owe much to wise, zealous leadership in any great undertaking. Both leaders and followers are equally essential.

Exposition of the Text

I. God Brings Counsel of Enemies to Nought (Neh. 4: 6, 15)

So we built the wall. The writer means that under such conditions as described above they worked in the building of the wall. He refers to the ridicule of their enemies.

The wall was joined together. The wording of this verse is rather difficult. The words *the height* are not in the original, as shown by the italics, so had to be supplied by the translators. And whether the word *height* or the word *breadth* should be supplied is a matter of opinion. Most commentators say the meaning is that the joining of the wall refers to the different sections built by as many groups being joined, presenting one continuous wall, but it was only half as high as originally, or as was planned. And then, as suggested in our golden text, all this building was made possible because the people had a mind to work. When people set their minds to do a piece of work, they can do things next to the impossible. We have a saying that people can do what they wish to do if the wish is strong enough. The early church preached the gospel to all the world, because they had a mind to do it; they were determined to do so. The church today can cover the earth with the message of Jesus if we have a mind to do it.

When our enemies heard that it was known unto us. The meaning of this verse depends on what is meant in verse 12. If verse 12 means

that the Jews in surrounding country hindered the work by trying to get workers to leave Jerusalem, we frankly see no way in which the counsel of the enemies was brought to nought. But if verse 12 means, as we suggested in the introduction, that the Jews living in the country learned of the plans of the enemies and brought the information to Nehemiah, we can understand that the counsel of the enemies was brought to nought. Then when the enemies heard that Nehemiah knew their plans, they were somewhat discouraged, and so their counsel was brought to nought at least for a time.

We returned all of us to the wall. This statement refers to verse 13, where we are told that when the plans of the enemy were made known to Nehemiah he set "the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows" in the lowest parts of the space behind the walls, in the open places. This seems to be a description of his arrangement of the people in view of the attack planned by the enemies, but made known by the Jews in surrounding country. When the enemy found that Nehemiah knew his plans and had prepared for the attack, he did not choose to do battle.

II. The Workers Arm for Battle (Neh. 4: 16-20)

Half of my servants wrought in the work. We are told that from that time forth half of Nehemiah's

servants worked and half of them held the weapons in readiness. This word *servants* does not refer to the Jews who had returned from captivity. They are in no sense of the word the servants of Nehemiah. But, being governor and the representative of the greatest nation on earth at that time, he did have a number of servants with him at all times. These servants may have been the "captains of the army and horsemen" the king sent with him from Shushan. (Neh. 2: 9.) We have no intimation of their return after the arrival of Nehemiah in Palestine.

The rulers were behind all the house of Judah. Here we have the word *rulers* again. This word refers to the men who were in charge of affairs when Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem. (Neh. 2: 16.) This verse seems to suggest that their part of the work was to act as overseers. The fact that they were on the job at all implies that all the able-bodied men in Jerusalem had some actual responsibility in the building of the wall; that all business and governmental operations ceased until the wall was completed.

With one of his hands wrought in the work. Two classes of people are mentioned in this verse, those who built the wall and those who bore the burdens. We would class them now as skilled and unskilled workmen. We are told that each worker used one hand to do his work and the other hand to carry a weapon. This is a figure of speech which need not be taken in its absolute literal meaning. However, it does mean that each worker had his weapon so near he could lay his hand on it at a moment's notice.

Every one had his sword girded by his side. This is said only of the builders. Who are they? In verse 17 we are told that "they that builded the wall" and the burden bearers worked with one hand while they held their weapon in the other. Are the "builders" of verse 18 to be distinguished from "they that builded the wall"? We think they are the same. So working with one hand while holding the weapon with the other is seen to be a figurative expression meaning to have the weapon at hand, ready for use in a moment's notice.

He that sounded the trumpet was by me. This refers to the man who gave the signal for battle in case

the enemies decided to make an actual attack. It has been suggested that Nehemiah stood on high ground where he could see all the workmen and where he could be seen by men approaching the city. When the enemies came and found the Jews armed and ready for them, being forewarned by the Jews as mentioned in verse 12, they decided not to risk the issue to open battle.

Our God will fight for us. Nehemiah told the workers that the size of the task and the amount of work to be done made it necessary for them to be scattered over quite a territory; and in order to save time and worry as to the welfare of each other, he would keep a man with a trumpet with him at all times to give them a signal when and where to form a line of battle if it became necessary. All this is of interest to us only in that it gives us an idea of the conditions under which these people had to work and of the minute detail in matters of organization and operation of which Nehemiah was capable. Then as an encouragement to his people, he reminded them that God was on their side, and that he would fight for them. It matters not how small and weak a group is, that group and God are a majority in any situation.

III. Perseverance in the Work (Neh. 4: 21-23)

So we wrought in the work. This verse begins by summarizing some of the things said in preceding verses. However, it adds a note concerning the amount of time they spent in their work. We are told that they labored from "the rising of the morning till the stars appeared." They were not bothered with rules and regulations as to how long they could work or how much they could do in one day. They had a job to be done in the shortest time possible, and they were willing to put unusual exertion into the work until the job was finished.

Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem. When the people returned from captivity, they brought seventy-three hundred slaves with them. (Ezra 2: 64, 65.) There were about one-sixth as many slaves as Jews in the group that came. Pulpit Commentary suggests that conditions have improved since their coming to Jerusalem, and now every man has his slave. We doubt if the

implication is justified, nor do we think this verse means that every man who worked on the wall had a slave. But the statement is made so as to include all who had slaves, so they would feel free to stay within the wall of the city. And this statement does imply that at least some of those who lived on farms in the country surrounding Jerusalem had slaves. However, it was not necessary for one to be rich in those days to own a slave.

In the night they may be a guard to us. Not only was there danger to the man and his slave going from work in Jerusalem to his home in the country, but if they stayed in the city overnight, they would be of assistance in case of an attack by night. We see more of the detailed caution and preparation which Nehemiah exhibited in his work of organization and administration of affairs in Jerusalem.

None of us put off our clothes. There are four groups mentioned in this verse. One is Nehemiah himself, then his servants, and then the men of the guard, the military escort given him by the king. (Neh. 2: 9.) None of these, except Nehemiah, was among the captives, or the people who lived in Jerusalem. The fourth group is mentioned as "my brethren," and we cannot be certain whom he means to include. But since neither of the other three groups include men living in Jerusalem, the most probable solution of this is that "brethren" here is to be taken in the natural sense and means his

brothers in the flesh. We know that one, Hanani (Neh. 1: 2), was interested in the condition of Jerusalem, and that he stirred Nehemiah's interest and caused him to ask the king to be allowed to do something to assist the people of Jerusalem to build the wall. Nehemiah says they stayed so close with the work that they did not take off their clothes day or night.

Every one went with his weapon to the water. This is the most difficult verse in the lesson. In fact no satisfactory solution of the meaning has been suggested. If we take out all the words in italics, we have "every one his weapon the water." To make sense our translators had to turn commentators to complete the sentence. Even then we see no connection between men not taking off their clothes and going with their weapons to the water. The usual comment is that Nehemiah and his helpers did not put off their clothes except for washing them. While we cannot be sure of the meaning of this particular statement, we are sure of the general meaning of the verse. These men stayed with the work closely day and night. They were in command, but they did not take things easy. When overseers do nothing but boss, they soon lose the respect of the men they oversee. One reason why Nehemiah could get such hard work and fine cooperation from the people of Jerusalem was the fact that he and his servants worked just as long and as hard as they expected others to work.

Relation to Our Aim

1. No new persons or places mentioned in this lesson.

2. Lessons to be remembered, (a) Things which seemingly happened in a perfectly natural way are spoken of as having been brought about by Jehovah. When people who lived outside of Jerusalem learned the plans of the enemy and told Nehemiah, he considered that as the providence of God. (b) Nehemiah and his people worked with one hand and were ready to fight with the other. We may use this to suggest that we are to do the work of God

and at the same time be ready to fight the enemies of truth. With Nehemiah there was no compromise with the enemies of God; neither can we afford to compromise any principle of truth while we are doing the work of God. (c) Nehemiah was a working overseer, rather than one who stood around and watched others do the work. By staying so closely with the work, he gained the confidence and respect of all the people and secured a degree of cooperation that got the desired results.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

Who is said to have had a mind to work?

What is the greatest source of interest and enthusiasm?

What is your definition for cooperation?
 How would you illustrate the necessity for cooperation?
 What is the connection between cooperation and good leadership?
 Name and discuss ways to get people to have a mind to work.
 Name and discuss three blessings to be had from working together.
 What is the connection between work and eternal salvation?

Introduction

What do you know of Nehemiah's ability to organize his forces for work?
 To what did Nehemiah's enemies resort first?
 What caused his enemies to stop short of actual battle?
 How did Nehemiah appeal to the people to work for God and their homes?

God Brings Counsel of Enemies to Nought

What do you know of the height of the wall the people built?
 To what is this great accomplishment attributed?
 What is suggested as to the amount of work we can do?
 How were the movements and plans of his enemies brought to Nehemiah?
 What effect did this have on his enemies?

How did this information brought from outside the city assist Nehemiah?

The Workers Arm for Battle

How did Nehemiah's servants conduct themselves?
 What is said of the rulers of the people?
 What does this imply with reference to Nehemiah's use of available manpower in Jerusalem?
 What is said of the workers' readiness to fight?
 What classification is made of the workers in this statement?
 What arrangements were made for calling the workers together to defend the city?
 How did Nehemiah encourage the people in their work?

Perseverance in the Work

How long did Nehemiah and his helpers work each day?
 What do you know about slaves of the people in Jerusalem?
 What arrangements were made so these slaves could be protection at night?
 Who are the brethren of Nehemiah mentioned in this lesson?
 What is said of the way they stayed with the work?
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to be remembered?

Lesson XIII—December 25, 1955

TEACHING THE LAW OF GOD

Lesson Text

Neh. 8: 1-3, 5, 6, 8-12

1 And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the broad place that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ez'ra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Mó'ses, which Je-ho'-vah had commanded to Is'-ra-el.

2 And Ez'-ra the priest brought the law before the assembly, both men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.

3 And he read therein before me broad place that was before the water gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women, and of those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were *attentive* unto the book of the law.

5 And Ez'-ra opened the book in the sight of all the people (for he was above all the people); and when he opened it, all the people stood up.

6 And Ez'-ra blessed Je-ho'-vah, the great God; and all the people answered, A-men', A-men', with the lifting up of their hands; and they bowed their heads, and worshipped

Je-ho'-vah with their faces to the ground.

8 And they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, so that they understood the reading.

9 And Ne-he-mi'-ah who was the governor, and Ez'-ra the priest the scribe, and the Le'-vites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto Je-ho'-vah your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.

10 Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye grieved; for the joy of Je-ho'-vah is your strength.

11 So the Le'-vites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved.

12 And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“The *opening of thy words giveth light*” (Psalm 119: 130.)
 DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 119: 97-104.

Daily Bible Readings

- December 19. M..... A Faithful Teacher of the Law (Ezra 7: 6-10)
- December 20. T..... A Praying Teacher of the Law (Ezra 8: 21-23)
- December 21. W. Ezra Reads the Law to the People (Neh. 8: 1-12)
- December 22. T. Observing the Words of the Law (Neh. 8: 13-18)
- December 23. F..... Finding the Book of the Law (2 Chron. 34: 14-19)
- December 24. S..... Loving God’s Law (Psalm 119: 97-104)
- December 25. S..... Teaching the Law at Home (Deut. 6: 1-9)

TIME.—445 B. C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Nehemiah, Ezra, and the people.

Golden Text Explained

1. The meaning of the text, (a)

What is meant by the *opening* of the words of God? “The word as here used to denote the opening or unfolding of the word of God; the revelation of the word to the mind. A door is opened so that we may enter a house; a gate, so that we may enter into a city; and thus the meaning of the word of God is *opened* to us, so that we may, as it were, enter in and see its beauty. The language does not, therefore, denote the entrance of the word *into* the mind, but, its being made open to *us* so that we may perceive its beauty, or may ourselves ‘enter’ into its meaning, its mysteries, and its beauties.” (Barnes) This expression is also used in the New Testament to express the manner in which teaching was done. Jesus opened the scriptures to the two men on the highway. (Luke 24: 32.) Paul was “opening and alleging that it behooved the Christ to suffer.” (Acts 17: 3.) The Greek word mean “to open thoroughly; to open the sense of the scriptures; to cause one to understand; to explain, to expound.” (Thayer) (b) Giving light cannot be taken in its literal sense. It means to enlighten; to inform so as to guide one aright. As sunlight drives out darkness and makes it possible for us to see how to walk about, so the explanation of the scripture informs that we may go about our daily walks of life without making mistakes and without injury to ourselves. It is like the rising of the sun, or the turning on of a light.

2. **Our need of light, (a)** We need light to direct us, to enable us to go about. So the word of God serves to direct us. “When thou walkest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest,

it shall watch over thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk to thee. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.” (Prov. 6: 22, 23.) Again, David says, “Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and light unto my path.” (Psalm 119: 105.) We have much difficulty walking around in places familiar to us without light, but we are completely lost in places unfamiliar to us if we have no light. None of us has traveled the road we are now traveling, so we are very much in need of light on the way to enable us to walk with confidence, (b) Furthermore, we are constantly in need of light; we never get to the place where we can get along without it and be safe. If I turn on the light in one room of my house, I do not expect that one light to afford sufficient light for me to walk all over the house. If I turn on the lights of my car for one mile, that does not mean that I can travel the rest of the distance without them. Again, the lights of my car do not throw light from my home to the point to which I expect to drive, but they extend far enough to give me direction with confidence. So the light on the pathway of life does not show me every step of the way from beginning to end at once, but as I travel along, the light is sufficient to direct me with all confidence.

3. **The folly of refusing light.** We can hardly imagine one so foolish as to refuse to enjoy the light of the sun, or of the electric lamp; one who would shut himself in a dark room and stay there. His health, both mentally and physically, would be injured by such a course of action. So those who refuse to accept the

light of God's word in their lives are injured spiritually. The prophet tells us that no man is able to direct his own steps aright. (Jer. 10: 23.) Would one insist on walking about in a dark cavern without a light or a guide? To do so would be to invite destruction. So those who refuse to allow the light of God's word to guide them through the pitfalls all about us in this life are

inviting destruction of soul for both time and eternity. "There is grievous correction for him that forsaketh the way; and he that hateth reproof shall die." (Prov. 15: 10.) "Whoso loveth correction loveth knowledge; but he that hateth reproof is brutish." (Prov. 12: 1.) Since the word corrects and reproves, it follows that those who refuse it are brutish and will die because they refuse it.

Introduction

Some of the conditions in Jerusalem with which Nehemiah had to contend are of interest by way of introduction. The people raised a "great cry" on account of the impoverished conditions under which they had to live. Their poverty was due to several causes, some poor for one reason and others for another reason. First, some complained that they had large families and their incomes were not sufficient to take care of them. Next, there seems to have been a dearth, whether continuing at that time is not clear, which caused some to be unable to get enough to eat. And, third, they found the tax which they had to send to the king too heavy for their impoverished condition. As a result of one or more of these conditions, many of the people had mortgaged their homes for all they were worth. When the money they borrowed on their homes failed, they had given their children into bondage for more money. The sad thing about this was that these poor people had sold their children to their rich brethren. When Nehemiah heard these things, he says he was "very angry." He could not cancel all these debts. And if he had had the authority to do so, it would not have been wise for him to do that while he was trying to get people to follow his counsel to build the wall and improve the city in gen-

eral. So he called a public meeting and put the matter before all the people. There is nothing better than a lot of sunshine and fresh air for a room with foul odors; nor is there anything better than a complete public airing for ungodliness which men are trying to keep under cover. Nehemiah and his servants and brothers gave what they could to relieve the poor and appealed to these ungodly and oppressive rich men to restore the property they held in mortgage and send back home the children they held as pledges and stop their practice of usury. The men promised in that public meeting to do so, but Nehemiah was not naive enough to think they would all keep a promise; so he put pressure on them to take an oath before the priest that they would keep their promise. (Neh. 5: 1ff.)

Nehemiah tells us that the wall was finished in fifty-two days. (Neh. 6: 15.) And when it was finished, he gave his brother Hanani and a man named Hananiah "charge over Jerusalem." He gave orders to close all gates at night and not to open until "sun be hot." (Neh. 7: 1-4.) He also took a census for the purpose of bringing enough people in from the country to fill the city, for the "city was wide and large; but the people were few therein, and the houses were not builded." or repaired.

Exposition of the Text

I. People Gather to Hear the Scripture (Neh. 8: 1-3)

The people gathered themselves together. We are told that this was the first day of the seventh month, according to the sacred calendar; it was the first month in the civil calendar. This was the time of the feast of trumpets. "Instead of the mere blowing of the trumpets of the temple at the time of the offering of the sacrifices, it was 'a day of

blowing of trumpets.' In addition to the daily sacrifices and the eleven victims offered on the first of every month, there were offered a young bullock, a ram, and seven lambs of the first year, with accustomed meat-offerings, and a kid for a sin-offering. (Num. 29: 1-6.)" (Smith's Bible Dictionary.)

Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses. The scribes were the writers and the guardians

of the law. At the beginning of the law of Moses the priests were the teachers, but in the time of our Lord the scribes had largely supplanted the priests even in the teaching of the law. Ezra combined both the offices of the priest and of the scribe, but he is best known as the scribe. It is to be noticed here that the people requested that the law be read to them. Not many copies of the law were available to the people in that time, and they got hungry to hear the law read. If we did not have access to the Bible, or if there were a law against reading the Bible, we might know better how to appreciate our great privilege of reading it daily. Notice also that in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah the writing of the law was ascribed to Moses. Our highly educated critics today claim to know more about who wrote the books of the Bible than the people who lived back near the time it was written, and they tell us that Moses did not write the Pentateuch. Furthermore, they did not give Moses credit for originating the law which he wrote; they gave Jehovah credit for that, and Moses only wrote what Jehovah gave him.

All that could hear with understanding. This was a gathering of adults, men and women, or young people who were able to profit from the reading of the law. This suggests that there are some things contained in the scriptures which are too difficult for little children. Some brethren contend that all, young and old, should be taught in one group, for scripture is so written that all may profit from the reading and study of any portion of it. Nehemiah and Ezra did not so think and act. This does not mean that little children cannot get anything at all from such portions of the scripture; but it does mean that they could not profit from the mere reading of it, nor from the explanations which would be given that day to the adults who wished to hear the teaching of the law.

From early morning until midday. These people were not "clock-watchers." Some brethren watch the clock and the preacher to see that a period of worship does not continue more than one hour. If the worship is prolonged, these brethren take a first-class case of the "fidgets" until the audience is dismissed, and then they let out a barrage of criticism

of the preacher, which would make one think the preacher was a real enemy of the church. Yet these same people can sit for hours in a picture show or in a cold rain to see a ball game without getting tired or worried. Some of us need to check up to see if we really love the Lord and his church more than we love and enjoy the world. The people in Nehemiah's day loved the law of the Lord and would sit for hours to hear it.

And the ears of all the people were attentive. The meaning of this statement is that the ears of the people were fixed upon the reading of the book; nothing was allowed to interfere with their hearing of the law as read from the book. This shows how highly they valued the scripture. Many people say they do not have time to read the Bible, yet they find time each day to listen to their favorite radio and television programs and to read the daily paper. Of course, there is no sin in doing these things, but to do these things and say we have no time for reading the Bible shows how we value the Bible as compared to other things.

II. Attitude of the People toward the Law (Neh. 8: 5, 6, 8)

For he was above all the people. In verse 4 we are told that a "pulpit of wood" had been made for Ezra and other readers to use on this occasion. Putting the reader up where he can be seen by all assists in hearing and understanding what is said.

All the people stood up. This is the reaction of the people to the opening of the book of scripture. It shows their respect for the word of God. When we are reading the Bible, God is talking to us. We do not enter the house of worship when people are praying, talking to God; neither should we enter while God is talking to the people. It is discourteous to look around and show disinterest while one is talking to us. We are lacking in common courtesy, to say nothing of reverence, to God when we pay no attention to the reading of his word.

Ezra blessed Jehovah. Was Ezra, a creature, in position to bless Jehovah, the Creator? The word blessed is used here in the sense of praise. David blessed Jehovah, saying, "Blessed be thou, O Jehovah, the God of Israel our father, for ever

and ever. Thine, O Jehovah, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Jehovah, and thou art exalted as head above all." (1 Chron. 29: 10, 11.) And when Ezra had blessed Jehovah in some such words, the people responded, "Amen, Amen."

They bowed their heads, and worshipped Jehovah. This is further evidence of their great respect and reverence for the word of God. The text says they worshiped Jehovah "with their faces to the ground." Whether they prostrated themselves on the ground is not clear. The implication is rather opposed to the idea of prostration. Verse 5 says they "stood up," and verse 6 says they were lifting up their hands. So it seems they lifted up their hands while saying "Amen" to Ezra's blessing, and then they bowed their heads low in worship as a sign of humble gratitude for all God's mercies, and especially for his word, which they have the privilege of reading and storing in their hearts. If we would cultivate such an attitude toward the Bible today, we would live more closely to its teaching. Lack of reverence for the Bible cannot be covered, for it will be manifested in our actions every day we live.

They read in the book, in the law of God. We should notice the terms used in this chapter when referring to the law. In verse 1 it is called "the law of Moses"; in verse 3 it is called "the law"; in verse 8 it is called "the law of God"; and in verse 14 it is referred to in these words, "Jehovah had commanded by Moses." Some people tell us that the law binding on the Jews was divided into moral and ceremonial; the moral law is contained in the ten commandments and called the law of God; the ceremonial contains all the rest of the commandments and statutes and is called the law of Moses. They say the law of Moses was taken out of our way, being nailed to the cross, but that the law of God, the ten commandments, is eternal and still binding. In this manner they hope to establish the fourth commandment as eternal and binding, so we must keep the Sabbath. But in our text the terms "law of Moses" and "law of God" are both used with reference to the command to keep the feast of

tabernacles. And in Luke 2: 22 both terms are used with reference to the offering Mary offered in connection with her purification following the birth of Jesus. So the terms "law of God," "law of the Lord," and "law of Jehovah" cannot be restricted to the ten commandments, nor are all the moral laws contained in these commandments. Nor can we say that the term "law of Moses" does not refer to any of the ten commandments. (Mark 7: 10; John 7: 19.)

And they gave the sense. They made such comments as would assist the people to get the meaning of the scripture read. Evidently they made some such explanations as we make on these lesson texts so as to "open the scriptures," to draw out the meaning and implications and so direct the people to walk in the paths indicated. This was the first form of preaching. Some think pulpit preaching originated here. However, the prophets had been speaking publicly to the people for a long time. Whether they used scripture texts as Ezra and his helpers did on this occasion is not clear. But if one wishes to have an old Testament example of one "taking a text and preaching from it," he certainly may use this as an example of such preaching.

III. A Day of Feasting Follows (Neh. 8: 9-12)

This day is holy unto Jehovah your God. In Num. 29: 1-6 we learn how the Jews were to celebrate the first day of the year. It is called "a day of blowing of trumpets." It was also a day of special offerings. The people were brought to tears over their failure to live by the law which had been read to them. But Ezra and Nehemiah told them to forget for the day their mistakes and rejoice in the goodness of God. Rejoicing in their blessings was more in harmony with the spirit of the day than was sorrowing for their sins.

Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet. These are terms expressing enjoyment of all the good things the Lord has sent our way. This does not encourage, much less endorse, gluttony and dissipation in which some indulge during times of festivity.

Send portions unto him. They were not to be selfish in the enjoyment of their good things, but were to remember those who did not have enough of the necessities of life to engage in a real festival. Even in

Old Testament times God's people were to be mindful of the poor and were not to enjoy the good things of life without sharing them with the unfortunate.

Make great mirth, because they had understood the words. This statement shows that much of their happiness consisted in the fact that they were able to hear and understand the word of Jehovah read to them from the law of Moses. They could well rejoice at hearing and understanding the law of God, for it is a light to our feet, a chart for

the traveler, a compass for the sailor; it is food for the soul, balm for the aching heart, and medicine for the sick; it is a sword for the soldier, seed for the sower, and a girdle for the weary; it comforts the sorrowing, encourages the faint, and gives hope to the discouraged; it rebukes the ungodly, reproves the negligent, and corrects the wanderer; it is to be studied in life, cherished in death, and answered in judgment; let us rejoice at every opportunity we have to read it, appreciate every explanation we hear of it, and put into practice every word of it.

Relation to Our Aim

1. Persons to be remembered. Ezra is to be remembered as a scribe who was also a priest who brought the second group of people from Babylonian captivity, and who worked incessantly for a reformation of the religious practices of the people based upon a strict interpretation of the law of Jehovah as given through Moses.

2. Facts to be remembered, (a) The people gathered to read the law and stayed for hours at a time without murmuring. (b) They showed their reverence for the word of God by worshiping with their faces bowed toward the ground.

3. Lessons to be remembered, (a) When people are deeply religious and are most like Jesus, they love the

word of God and appreciate opportunities to study it; they will even take time from pleasure to study the Bible, (b) The people of Ezra's time were encouraged to read the Bible and listen to others read it. There was no thought that they were not capable of understanding its message. The reading of the Bible was not reserved to a few, who in turn gave the people only those portions they wished them to know. All the Bible was for all the people all the time,

(c) We should have times of rejoicing, but should not forget to share our good things with those who are not so fortunate; failing to share with the poor will make our rejoicing displeasing to God.

Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text from memory.

Give the time, places, and persons of this lesson.

Golden Text Explained

What is the meaning of the word opening in our text?

What New Testament characters are said to have opened the scriptures?

What is meant by the word giving light?

State and discuss two reasons why we need light physically and spiritually.

How long will we be in need of the light of God's word?

Can you illustrate the folly of rejecting the light of God's word?

What is said of those who refuse the correction of God's word?

Introduction

State and discuss three reasons for poverty of people in Nehemiah's time.

Why was Nehemiah very angry with his brethren?

How did Nehemiah correct the sinful conditions he found in Jerusalem?

How many days did the building of the wall require?

In whose hands did Nehemiah leave affairs in Jerusalem?

People Gather to Hear the Scripture

Name the two calendars which the Jews used.

Why was the first day of the seventh month important?

How was this day celebrated according to the law of Moses?

What offices did Ezra hold, and what titles did he wear?

To whom did Ezra ascribe the writing of the Pentateuch?

Who were allowed in this meeting for the reading of the law?

What does this suggest with reference to classifying students of the Bible?

How long did these people stay to listen to the reading of the law?

When people will go farther and stay longer for a ball game than for preaching, is this an indication of a lack of spirituality?

When people do not have time to read the Bible, should they take time to read their daily paper and listen to the radio?

Attitude of People Toward the Law

What arrangement was made so the people could hear Ezra?

What was the first reaction of the people to the reading of the scripture?

How can we show respect for the reading of the Bible today?

What does the word blessed in our text mean?

Give another action of the people which showed their reverence for the word of God?

Can the term "law of Jehovah" be restricted to any certain portion of the Bible?

Can you show that the "law of Moses" is also the "law of Jehovah"?

Do the ten commandments contain all the moral laws of the Old Testament?

Can you show that in Ezra we have an example of preaching from a text?

A Day of Feasting Follows

Why did Ezra tell the people **not to weep** that day?

What terms did he use to describe **their** rejoicing?

How were they to show their unselfishness in their rejoicings?

Give several reasons why people may rejoice in the word of God.

Relation To Our Aim

Why is Ezra to be remembered?

State some facts of this lesson worth remembering.

State and discuss three lessons to be remembered.