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**Teacher's Annual Lesson Commentary**

ON

UNIFORM BIBLE LESSONS

FOR THE

CHURCHES OF CHRIST

**1956**

This commentary is based on the Uniform Bible Lessons for the Churches of Christ

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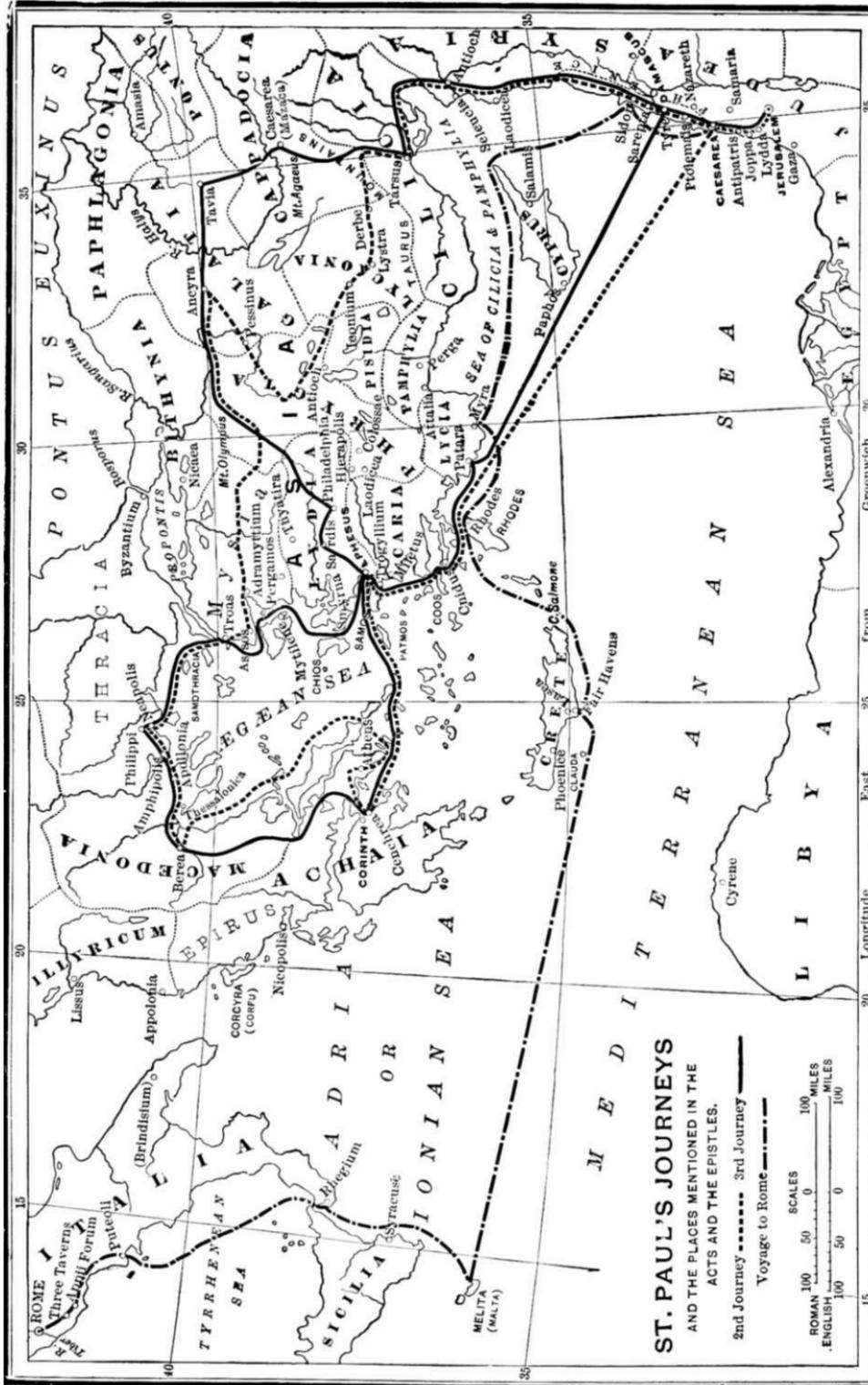
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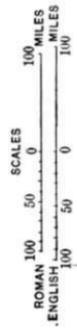
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### ST. PAUL'S JOURNEYS

AND THE PLACES MENTIONED IN THE ACTS AND THE EPISTLES.

1st Journey ————  
 2nd Journey .....  
 3rd Journey - · - · - ·  
 Voyage to Rome ————



## FIRST QUARTER

### PAUL AND HIS LETTERS TO THE CHURCH AT CORINTH

AIM: *TO consider carefully the numerous problems which existed in the church in Corinth, to note their solution by an inspired apostle, and thus to learn to cope with these and similar problems in the church today.*

**Lesson I—January 1, 1956**

### THE PARTY SPIRIT CONDEMNED

#### Lesson Text

10 Now I beseech you, brethren, 10-15; and I, brethren, could not speak through the name of our Lord Je'-sus Christ, that ye 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.

11 For it hath been signified unto me concerning you, my brethren, by them that are of the household of Chlo'-e, that there are contentions among you.

12 Now this I mean, that each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of A-p61'-16s; and I of Ce'-phas; and I of Christ.

13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized into the name of Paul?

14 I thank God that I baptized none of you, save Cris'-pus and Ga'-sius;

15 Lest any man should say that ye were baptized into my name.

2 I fed you with milk, not with meat; for ye were not yet able to bear it: nay, not even now are ye able;

3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal, and do ye not walk after the manner of men?

4 For when one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of A-pol'-los; are ye not men?

5 What then is A-p61'-16s? and what is Paul? Ministers through whom ye believed; and each as the Lord gave to him.

6 I planted, A-p61'-16s watered; but God gave the increase.

7 So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*" (Psalm 133: 1)

DEVOTIONAL READING:—1 Cor. 1: 1-9.

### Daily Bible Readings

#### Lesson Text

December 26. M.	Paul Arrives in Europe (Acts 16: 6-10)
December 27. T.	Paul's Experiences in Philippi (Acts 16: 11-40)
December 28. W.	In Thessalonica (Acts 17: 1-9)
December 29. T.	Paul in Berea (Acts 17: 10-13)
December 30. F.	Paul Goes to Athens (Acts 17: 16-32)
December 31. S.	Paul Arrives in Corinth (Acts 18: 1-4)
January 1. S.	Paul Preaches in Corinth (Acts 18: 1-5)

TIME.—A. D. 57.

PLACE.—Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints in Corinth.

#### Golden Text Explained

1. What is unity? (a) Union is not enough. The religious leaders of today are working for the union of all religious bodies, thinking they will attain to the unity for which Jesus prayed (John 17: 20-23) and that

which Paul demanded in our lesson text for today. Catholics, Jews, and Protestants might form a union, belong to the same organization, but until some of them have made radical changes in belief and practice there can be no unity. Bodies differing in doctrine and practice may form a union, but until they can "speak the same thing, and ... be perfected together in the same mind and the same judgment," they will not have unity in the sense in which it is used in our lesson today, (b) Unity for which Jesus prayed. Jesus prayed that his disciples, all who believe on him through the teaching of the apostles, would have that unity which existed between himself and his Father. (John 17: 21.) Surely no one can conceive of Jesus and his Father teaching contradictory principles and demanding different practices of their followers. The unity for which Jesus prayed and which Paul demanded of the saints at Corinth was a unity which consisted of believing the same thing, teaching the same thing, and practicing the same thing, (c) Unity must be visible to the world. Jesus prayed that those who believe in him would be one as he and the Father so the world would believe God sent him. (John 17: 23.) The unity has to be visible to the world if it causes the world to believe in him. Separate organizations, different names, contradictory doctrines, and inconsistent practices of the many religious bodies visible to the world prove to the world that believers are not united as the Lord prayed they would be. Until religious people are willing to give up unscriptural names and organizations and believe and practice what, and only what, is contained in the doctrine of the apostles, we can never have Christian unity.

2. Unity is good, (a) For the glory of God. Our text says it is good for brethren to dwell together in unity. And the first reason why it is good is that thereby God is glorified. God is honored in the eyes of the world when his people all believe and teach and practice the same things; but he is dishonored when his people are divided and when they fight and destroy each other, (b) For the world. Jesus prayed that the world might be able to see the unity of his people

so they would come to believe in God. If the unity of the people of God can cause the people of the world to believe in and come to God, that unity is certainly good for the world. Unity of teaching would be good for the world because it would eliminate all the confusion which now exists in the minds of people and makes it difficult for them to decide which teacher is teaching the truth. Unity of practice among believers would be good for the world because it would be a better example and much easier to follow. (c) For the church. Christian unity would be good for the church because it would free the church from the attention and effort which must be expended upon division and permit the same to be used in converting the world. Furthermore, the work of converting the world would be much easier for the church because the world, seeing the unity of believers, would be inclined to accept the message of a united church. Unity of believers is a good thing because Jesus prayed for it. We cannot conceive of him praying for anything which would not be for the good of the church and the glory of God.

3. Unity is pleasant. Our text says that it is a pleasant thing for brethren to dwell together in unity, (a) Peace versus strife. Unity promotes peace; the lack of unity promotes strife among people. Peace is pleasant; strife is unpleasant. Christian unity brings peace, both doctrinal and practical, so it brings about relationships between men. (b) Love versus enmity means ill-will, lack of love. Christian unity promotes love; lack of that unity promotes enmity among people. Love among brethren is a pleasant thing, but enmity is unpleasant. Since Christian unity promotes love among brethren and love is a pleasant thing, it follows that Christian unity is pleasant as well as good for brethren, (c) Joy versus sorrow. Joy is a state of happiness. Unity contributes to the happiness of people; lack of unity contributes to the sorrow of people. Joy is a pleasant state of being; sorrow is unpleasant. Since Christian unity brings happiness, and happiness is a pleasant thing, it follows that it is a pleasant thing for brethren to dwell together in unity.

## Introduction

The letter from which we study today is not the first letter Paul addressed to the church at Corinth. His first letter was not preserved. (1 Cor. 5: 9ff.) But this letter was made necessary by conditions which existed in the church. Paul had received news of the condition of the church both through individuals and by letter. The family of Chloe had told him something about the parties which existed (1: 11), and he mentions a letter he received from the church (7: 1). The manner in which he moves from one subject to another indicates that he is taking notice of matters about which the church had written. (7: 1; 8: 1; 11: 2; 12: 1; 15: 1; 16: 1.) False teachers had come among the people and had cast doubt on his apostleship and had taught different from Paul on a number of matters. So it became necessary for Paul to set them right on going to law with each other, eating meat sacrificed to idols, marriage and divorce, discipline of incestuous per-

sons, supporting preachers of the gospel, use of spiritual gifts, the place of women in the work of the church and their relation to men, and the resurrection. This is an unusually practical letter since it deals with so many things with which the church has to deal today; and in his dealings with things which we do not have today we learn great principles which help us in solving our twentieth century problems. The problem of division and party spirit is still with us. And it is easy for good men, anxious to defend the truth and build up the church, to lay undue emphasis on certain principles and gather around them other men whom they can influence and soon become leaders of a party set for the destruction of all brethren who do not agree with them or cooperate with them in their special emphasis of these principles. Not all party leaders are intentionally evil men, but they are engaged in an evil work regardless of their good intentions.

## Exposition of the Text

I. Paul Appeals for Unity (1 Cor. 1: 10-12)

Now I beseech you, brethren. Paul's manner of address is interesting. He beseeches rather than demands. Though he had authority "to enjoy thee that which is befitting, yet for love's sake" he prefers to beseech. (Phile. 8, 9.) And he calls them brethren in spite of the fact they were using his name for sectarian purposes and were guilty of several sins for which he will rebuke them sharply. This does not prove that we are to recognize people as brethren regardless of what they do and teach, but it does suggest a greater degree of tolerance and brotherly kindness than some are wont to show.

*Through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.* There is a difference between appealing to them *through the name of Christ* and *commanding in the name of Christ*. The latter is a term denoting authority, the former denotes sentiment. "This use of the word *name* is mainly a Hebrew usage, and stands for the person or the thing itself; or rather for everything belonging to it which is conjured up by

the mention of the name." He appeals to them by all that the name, the being, and the office of Jesus Christ means to them. And that he may bring the greatest possible pressure upon them he uses all three terms—Lord, Jesus, Christ. The word Lord signifies that he is Ruler; Jesus means he is our Saviour; and Christ signifies that he is the anointed of Jehovah.

*That ye all speak the same thing.* In order to do this, people will have to speak as the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4: 11); learn not to go beyond what is written (1 Cor. 4: 6); abide in the teaching of Christ (2 John 9); and speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where it is silent. Following the old Greek philosophers, the Corinthians were fond of "speculative discourses, philosophical dissertations, unscriptural reasonings, vapid dialectics for display's sake. . . which genders confessions and divisions." (McGarvey.)

*That there be no divisions among you.* Having appealed for unity of speech, Paul now appeals for unity of organization. These divisions which he condemns were not separate

denominational bodies with conflicting doctrines and entrance requirements, but simply schisms within the one body. But if Paul would be so opposed to these schisms in the one body, certainly he would condemn separate and antagonistic bodies exalting men by wearing their names in preference to the name of Christ. Paul appeals for organizational unity such as the world can see and be led to believe in Jesus. (John 17: 21.)

*Perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment.* Paul now appeals for unity of mind and judgment. Unity of mind refers to the inner state, thoughts, desires, purposes, and motives. Unity of judgment refers to the outward exhibition of the mind in our actions. Being perfected together is the opposite picture of what is suggested in the schisms of the preceding phrase. This threefold unity—1. Speech; 2. Organization, 3. Mind and judgment, or purpose and action—is the unity for which Jesus prayed among all who believe on him through the teaching of the apostles. (John 17: 20-23.) This is the unity for which we should plead. Gospel preachers of a generation ago preached often on this subject and begged denominational people to leave sectarian bodies wearing unscriptural names and take their stand upon common ground, that which is accepted by all as the word of the Lord. We need to get back to that plea. Preachers need to make their pleas more often and stronger, and teachers of Bible classes need to put greater emphasis upon the gospel as the only basis of unity. We do not stand upon sectarian ground, but ground common to all who believe the Bible to be the word of God. No group of people has to give up anything scriptural to stand with us in our plea for unity of believers.

*It hath been signified unto me.* Paul gave the source of his information concerning the divided condition of the church at Corinth. He says he was informed by some of the household of Chloe. The Greek simply says, "By those of Chloe." So we do not know whether they were children, kinsmen, or slaves of this woman. Nor do we know whether Chloe was a resident of Corinth or of Ephesus, from which place Paul wrote this letter. But it is obvious from what is said that the Corin-

thians would know who Paul's informers were from what he wrote. Nor did Paul classify this information as idle gossip.

Each *one of you saith, I am of Paul?* The church was divided four ways. One group was for Paul. These accepted what Paul taught about the freedom of the Gentiles from Jewish ceremonialism. Another group was for Apollos. There was no doctrinal differences between these two groups, but some preferred Apollos on account of his eloquence, "his Alexandrian refinements, his allegorizing exegesis, the culture and polish of his style." A third group was for Peter. Paul uses the word Cephas, the Hebrew equivalent of Peter, which may suggest that his following in Corinth was composed of those who opposed Paul's teaching as to the freedom of Gentiles from Jewish ceremonialism; they were Judaizers. This is no proof that Peter agreed with them or encouraged them in their opposition to Paul. We may be sure from what he wrote of Paul that he would not do such. (2 Pet. 3: 15, 16.) The fourth party was for Christ. But since Paul makes no distinction in his condemnation we are forced to believe that they were using the name of Christ in a sectarian manner just like the others were using the names of these three good men. These may have been Jews who had heard and seen Jesus and felt like they had a special claim to him. (2 Cor. 10: 7.)

## II. Party Spirit Shown to Be Wrong

(1 Cor. 1: 13-15)

*Is Christ divided?* Since the church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1: 22, 23; Col. 1: 18), a division of the church would mean a divided Christ. And since a divided kingdom cannot stand (Matt. 12: 25, 26), a church divided among popular leaders is bound for failure. Jesus will not condescend to be head of a bunch of petty sects giving more honor to their popular preachers than they give to the Lord. The denominational world would make a more complete and lasting division of Christ than the church at Corinth was about to make, and should give heed to the rebuke Paul administered to the church.

*Was Paul crucified for you?* The blood which Jesus shed in his death

was the purchase price of the church. (Acts 20: 28.) So it was Jesus who bought them and owned them. Paul was not crucified for them; his blood had not purchased them; and so they did not belong to him and had no right to act toward him as if he had. A general induction from this would lead us to affirm that we are obligated to wear the name of him who was crucified for us. To wear the name of another is to give honor to the other which belongs only to him who was crucified for us.

*Were ye baptized into the name of Paul?* Paul did not ask if they were baptized in the name of Paul, which would mean a baptism by the authority of Paul. He asked if they had been baptized *into* the name of Paul, which would mean that they had come by the act of worshipful obedience into fellowship and communion with Paul as their Lord. When one is baptized into the name of Christ, he gives honor to Christ as Lord in that act of worshipful obedience. Certainly those who were holding up Paul as their leader would not affirm that they so regarded Paul, or that they had intended to deify him in such manner or degree. It is presumed that good men will cease to do such when their attention is called to it. And a general deduction from this principle would lead us to conclude that we have no right to wear the name of any one into whose name we have not been baptized. Since we have been baptized into the name of Christ, we should wear the name of Christ. Since we have not been baptized into any human name, it follows that we should not wear any such name. And since we have no right to wear a name into which we have not been baptized, it follows that we have no right to wear the name of Christ until we have been baptized into it. This being true, no one is a Christian, no one has a right to wear the name Christian until that one has been baptized into the name of Christ. But since one who has no right to wear the name of Christ is not a Christian, it follows that one who has not been baptized into the name of Christ is not a Christian.

*7 thank God that I baptized none of you, save Crispus and Gaius.* Crispus was the ruler of the synagogue in Corinth before Paul converted him. (Acts 18: 8.) Gaius was a man of

Corinth known for his hospitality, not only to Paul, but to the whole church. (Rom. 16: 23.) These were not the only converts Paul made in Corinth, but these and the family of Stephanas (verse 15) were the only people Paul baptized with his own hands. Since Paul gives thanks to God that such is true, it seems to be implied that the providence of God protected Paul in this instance from any suspicion that he had had any part in making disciples in his own name. Since these few people were the only ones Paul personally baptized, they were the only people in Corinth who possibly have even the resemblance of an excuse to affirm that they had been baptized into his name. So Paul was happy that in the providence of God he had by his own hands baptized so few, and that all his other converts had been baptized by some of his helpers in the work. There are some general lessons we should learn from this. (1) Paul was just as unwilling for people to wear HIS name of Apollos or Peter. He would certainly not condemn some for wearing the names of Apollos and Peter and wink at or encourage others in wearing his name. (2) He used his own name lest some might think he was jealous of Apollos or Peter. And since he used his own name neither Apollos nor Peter could possibly think he was trying to imply that they were encouraging people to wear their names. (3) All men should learn that it is sinful to wear human names in the place of, or in addition to, the name of Christ. To wear a man's name religiously is to exalt that man to the level of Christ.

### III. Party Spirit Makes Men Carnal

(1 Cor. 3: 1-7)

*Could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal.* Some of the criticism against Paul evidently was that his teaching was so simple and elementary. He does not deny the charge, but proceeds to give the reason for it. The reason lay not in his inability to teach profound things, but in their incapacity to receive things more profound than he taught. In the latest and best Greek text we have one word, *sarkinos*, for carnal in verse 1, and another, *sarkikos*, for carnal in verses 3 and 4. The first means that of which a thing is made. An earthen vessel is a vessel

made of earth; so a carnal ("fleshen"—Trenchard wished for such a word) man is one made of flesh. He is unspiritual, not anti-spiritual. The second, *sarkikos*, refers to one who is under the dominion of the flesh, who serves the demands and satisfies the lusts of his flesh. A spiritual man, as used in this verse, is one who is filled with or governed by the Holy Spirit.

*As unto babes in Christ.* This suggests that they had not made the progress in Christ they should have made. If they had advanced as they should, Paul could have taught them more profound principles of the gospel. There are three things essential to growth in Christ. (1) Desire. Peter tells us we are to desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow thereby. (1 Pet. 2: 1, 2.) People who can go for weeks or months without reading the Bible do not have the desire essential to growth. (2) Study. This is to the spiritual man what eating is to the physical man. As appetite drives us to food for the body, so desire, interest, drives us to food for the soul. People who study little, or never, will starve spiritually; they will be weak, lacking in energy, and courage. (3) Exercise. What physical exercise is to the body, Christian activity is to the soul, the spiritual man. People who never do good works are dead spiritually.

*I fed you with milk, not with meat.* Their lack of growth made it necessary for Paul to deal with the elementary things of the gospel, milk of the word. Milk is for those who lack experience in the word of righteousness, but solid food, meat of the gospel, is for those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil. (Heb. 5: 13, 14.)

*Ye are yet carnal.* Here Paul uses the strongest word discussed above. He accuses them of being under the dominion of the flesh, satisfying the lusts of the flesh. And as proof of this he cites their jealousy and strife. These things he classes as works of the flesh. (Gal. 5: 20.) And in this same reference he says those who practice the works of the flesh cannot enter the kingdom of God. So the condition of the brethren at Corinth was most serious. They were divided over leaders, preachers of the gospel.

This division was proof of jealousy and strife. These things go together; they are related as cause and effect. Hence we conclude that those who are divided over men and are wearing the names of men are under the dominion of the flesh to such a degree that they can have no part in the kingdom of God.

*When one saith, I am of Paul.* Let some one should think Paul was talking about some other work of the flesh, he calls their attention to their divisions over Paul, Apollos, and Cephas. These are the divisions which he terms works of the flesh. These are all the proof needed to show that they were walking after the manner of man and not after the teaching of the Spirit. To walk after the manner of man means to walk in the wisdom of men, to fulfill the desires of man unaided and untaught by the Holy Spirit. No man has ever been able to please God while walking after his own desires, following in the ways of his own wisdom. (Rom. 8: 5-8; Jer. 10: 23.)

*What then is Apollos?* Some take the neuter, *what*, to be used in disparagement, but it is possible that Paul used the neuter because of the office, or part, these men play in God's scheme. Certainly this is what he had in mind, for he immediately answers his question by identifying the place they filled.

*Ministers through whom ye believed.* This is *what* Paul and Apollos were. They were not men to be served and honored; they were servants. The word minister is the same as deacon; they were servants of the gospel. It should be noticed that they were ministers *through* whom the people believed, not ministers in whom they believed. They were being exalted by these divisions as if they were ministers in whom Christians believed. They were mere instruments in the hands of the Lord to bring people to believe in Christ that they might be saved. And each one ministered as of the grace God gave. (Rom. 12: 6-8; 1 Pet. 4: 11.)

*I planted, Apollos watered.* To PLANT to do the first work in a community. To water means to care for that which has been started. Neither he that plants nor he that waters deserves any credit, for only God can give the increase; all praise belongs to him.

### Lessons to Learn

1. Unity is a powerful instrument for bringing men to belief in Jesus Christ, but division among his people can make more infidels than all the arguments of unbelievers.

2. Wearing of party names not only perpetuates divisions, but it exalts men to that position which only Jesus Christ has a right to enjoy. We have no right to wear any name other than that of him who was crucified for us, or that into which we were baptized. Wearing the name of a gospel ordinance as Baptists do, or of gospel polity as do the Presbyterians, is

little, or no better than wearing the names of man; as both rob Christ of the glory which belongs only to him.

3. Since this is the first Sunday in the new year, and since remaining babes all our lives is displeasing to the Lord, how many will resolve today that they will (1) cultivate the desire for spiritual food; (2) satisfy that desire regularly by daily study of God's word; and (3) exercise themselves in godliness by doing something good for the Lord each day? Surely this is not an impossible or unreasonable task. Let's do it!

### Questions for the Class

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

#### Golden Text Explained

Can you distinguish between union and unity?  
What is the unity for which Jesus prayed?  
Can you prove that this unity is visible to the world?  
Discuss some of the things necessary for people to give in order to have this unity.  
How does unity contribute to the glory of God?  
How will the world profit from the unity of believers?  
What good can the church derive from unity?  
Give three reasons why unity is pleasant.

#### Introduction

What evidence do we have that Paul wrote an earlier letter to the Corinthians?  
What caused Paul to write to the Corinthians this time?  
Name several of the subjects on which he wrote in this letter we are to study.  
Is it possible for us to have such parties in the church as those in Corinth?

#### Paul Appeals for Unity

Discuss Paul's manner of address to the church?  
Contrast an appeal through the name and a command in the name of Christ.  
How can people all speak the same thing in religion?  
Can you show that Paul taught the necessity of unity of organization?  
What is the difference between unity of mind and unity of judgment?

Is our plea for unity as vigorous as it should be?  
What was Paul's source of information as to the conditions at Corinth?  
Why were some for Paul? for Apollos? for Cephas?  
Why was it wrong for others to be for Christ?  
Were these men responsible for the divisions wearing their names?

#### Party Spirit Shown to Be Wrong

What did Paul mean by asking if Christ was divided?  
What relation is there between crucifixion of Christ and the name we wear?  
What is the connection between baptism and the name we wear?  
Can you show that the unbaptized have no right to wear the name of Christ?  
Can you name the individuals Paul baptized in Corinth?  
Why was Paul thankful he baptized so few?  
State and discuss three general lessons we should learn from this point.

#### Party Spirit Makes Men Carnal

Can you state two meanings of the word carnal in this lesson?  
Contrast the meaning of spiritual and carnal.  
Why had Paul taught only simple gospel lessons at Corinth?  
Name and discuss three things essential to spiritual growth.  
Can you distinguish between milk and meat of the gospel? Illustrate.  
What proof did Paul have of their carnality? And how serious is the sin?  
How does Paul take the glory of gospel work from men and give it to God?  
What is there of interest to you in "lessons to learn"?

## Lesson II—January 8, 1956

## THE APOSTLES EXAMPLES

## Lesson Text

1 Cor. 4: 9-21

9 For, I think, God hath set forth us the apostles last of all, as men doomed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, both to angels and men.

10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye have glory, but we have dishonor.

11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place;

12 And we toil, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure;

13 Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things, even until now.

14 I write not these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children.

15 For though ye have ten thousand tutors in Christ, yet *have* ye not many fathers; for in Christ Je'-sus I begat you through the gospel.

16 I beseech you therefore, be ye imitators of me.

17 For this cause have I sent unto you Tim'-6-thy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who shall put you in remembrance of my ways which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church.

18 Now some are puffed up, as though I were not coming to you.

19 But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will; and I will know, not the word of them that are puffed up, but the power.

20 For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

21 What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ."*  
(1 Cor. 11: L)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Cor. 4: 1-8.

## Daily Bible Readings

January	2.	M. . . . .	Gallio Defends Paul in Corinth (Acts 18: 12-16)
January	3.	T. . . . .	How Paul Preached in Corinth (1 Cor. 2: 1-16)
January	4.	W. . . . .	Attitude of Greeks Toward the Gospel (Cor. 1: 18-30)
January	5.	T. . . . .	Factions, Parties, Divisions Condemned (Gal. 5: 16-21)
January	6.	F. . . . .	Fruit of the Spirit Unity (Gal. 5: 22-25)
January	7.	S. . . . .	Hate of the Devil (1 John 3: 10-12)
January	8.	S. . . . .	Paul a Great Sufferer (2 Cor. 11: 16-33)

TIME.—A. D. 57.

PLACE.—Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints in Corinth.

## Golden Text Explained

1. Paul worthy of imitation. Perhaps there is no other character mentioned in the New Testament, except Jesus Christ, who is more worthy of imitation than Paul the apostle. In our text Paul says for us to follow him as he follows Christ, yet in other places he simply exhorts us to follow his example. He told the church at Thessalonica that he had made himself an ensample unto them (2 Thess. 3: 9), and commends them for imitating him (1 Thess. 1:-

6). He wrote the church at Philippi to be imitators of him and to mark those who walked differently. (Phil. 3: 17.) And he promised them that the God of peace would be with them if they did the things they saw in him. (Phil. 4: 9.) There are many things in Paul for us to imitate, (a) His willingness to turn from error. Paul was a man of conviction. He believed in standing for what he thought was right. But when he was convinced that he was in error he

was humble enough to admit and make a change. His conversion on the Damascus road (Acts 9: 1ff.) illustrates this characteristic, (b) His love for the lost. Paul loved lost souls so much that he said he could wish that he were anathema for the sake of his Jewish brethren. (Rom. 9: 1-4.) This love for souls led him to labor more abundantly than other apostles for the salvation of souls. If all today would imitate him in this, there would be more mission work done all over the world, (c) Sacrifice and self-denial to preach the gospel. Paul set the greatest example of self-denial and sacrifice we have, except that of our Lord. His example of sacrifice should be held up continually before churches, and people should be exhorted to imitate him in this respect. If every church member in America would determine to make some sacrifice of time and money every week in an effort to save lost souls, the church would soon be on fire with zeal, and we would be doubling our efforts to carry the gospel to the lost.

2. The value of imitation. (a) Imitation is recognized as one of the primary principles of education. We can learn to do things by watching others do them and then put into practice what we have learned by imitating those we have watched, (b) Children learn from their parents by imitating them both in their conversation and their actions. The fact that boys imitate their fathers and girls imitate their mothers makes it very necessary that all parents be careful of their walk and talk before their children. Yet we should not cease to be thankful that children imitate their parents, for through this means we may lead them into lives of devotion, consecration, and service to the Lord, (c) The Bible encourages imitation of good men and

women as a means of learning to live for the Lord. Incidents in the Old Testament happened by way of example to us, and they are written for our admonition. (1 Cor. 10: 6, 11.) New Testament writers constantly refer to saints and patriarchs of former dispensations and exhort us to imitate them in the good and to shun the evil in their lives. (James 5: 10.) "Beloved, imitate not that which is evil, but that which is good." (3 John 11.) The writer of Hebrews devoted one whole chapter to setting forth men of God of olden times worthy of our imitation. (Heb. 11.)

3. Limitation of imitation, (a) Ex- tent. Paul says in our text that we are to imitate him in so far as he imitates Jesus Christ. Certainly no good man would wish others to imitate him in his weaknesses. But only a leader of men can ask others to imitate him. Hence we must look upon Paul as a great man and worthy of imitation in many ways, (b) Wis- dom of limitation. It is easy to see the wisdom of limiting our imitation of a fallible man. The very best of men are weak and subject to mistakes both of ignorance and of weakness. Abraham was weak in faith on two occasions when through fear he said Sarah was his sister. Peter was weak in his loyalty to Jesus when he denied him. Paul seems to have been stub- born when he refused to take Mark along on the second journey. (Acts 15: 36ff.) (c) We should strive to live so that our lives can be a pattern to as many people in as many ways as possible. People about us are imi- tating us whether we aim for them to do so or not. And many times we are unconscious of how many are taking our lives as the pattern to guide them. So we must live at all times just like we know we would live if we were conscious that all our friends and neighbors were imitating us.

### Introduction

There are three lessons suggested in the paragraph preceding our text which are of interest to us and will help us understand our text. (1) Paul teaches us not to judge one another and for each one of us to be unconcerned about the judgment passed on us by our fellow man. He says there is a day coming when God will judge all men and all hidden

things will be brought to light, so we are to judge nothing before that time. And if some one gets in a hurry to judge us, we can count it a very small thing to be judged of man's judg- ment. To be bothered about the judgment passed on us by others is to show a weakness, or maybe an indication that we are guilty of things which brought on the judgment. So

instead of becoming offended and retaliating with harsh judgment, we are to be as Paul and count it a thing of little importance. (2) In verse 6, Paul tells us that he had transferred these matters to himself and Apollos in order to teach them a lesson about not going beyond what is written. By this he means that he had mentioned only his name and that of Apollos that he might spare others involved in the divisions and the sin of following men to the dishonor of Christ. In this statement we have a strong proof text to use against the sin of adding anything to the work and worship of the church as is set forth in the New Testament. We must learn not to go beyond that which is written. We go beyond what is written if we burn incense or use mechanical instruments of music in our worship. John tells us that

those who go beyond the teaching of Christ forfeits the fellowship of God. (2 John 9.) Since the teaching of Christ is written in the New Testament, it follows that those who go beyond what is written in the New Testament have not God. (3) We must realize that much of the language of our text, verses 9-13, is ironical. Paul contrasted the lowly despised state of the apostles with that self-confident, vainglorious, and haughty attitude so evident in the self-appointed leaders of the factions in the church at Corinth. He speaks of their being what in their conceit they think they are. And he speaks of himself and other apostles as being what the world thinks of them. If the reader will keep these things in mind, the language of our text becomes much easier to understand.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. State of the Apostles (1 Cor. 4: 9-13)

*God hath set forth us apostles last of all.* The word *set forth* means to exhibit or display; God had displayed them so as to be seen of all men. The word for *last of all* is not an adverb, but an adjective and refers to their rank. Jesus used it in this meaning when he said, "If any man would be first, he shall be last of all." (Mark 9: 35.) This lowly position which the apostles occupied is intended to be in contrast with the assumed position of Paul's critics as expressed in verse 8.

*As men doomed to death.* As men brought into the arena to fight with wild beasts had no possible chance of escaping death, so the apostles were given a work to do which exposed them to persecution and death. Jesus said they need not expect better treatment than their Lord; the world hated and crucified him, and it would give them similar treatment. (John 15: 18-21.) His critics considered themselves to be rich and reigning like kings while the apostles were as men doomed to death.

*We are made a spectacle.* If the Greek word were spelled with English letters we would have *theater* instead of *spectacle*, and in metaphor it means "one who is exhibited to be gazed at and made sport of." (Thayer.) The same thought is sug-

gested by the word *gazingstock* in Heb. 10: 33. The apostles were exposed to the gaze of both angels and men. No doubt the angels looked down in sympathy while men looked upon them with ridicule and contempt. Some have argued that the reference here is to bad angels, demons, but the word without a modifying adjective always refers to good angels.

*We are fools for Christ's sake.* Paul continues in these words to contrast the real condition of the apostles with the supposed condition of his critics in the church at Corinth. In the eyes of his critics and of the world generally the apostles were foolish. If Paul were on earth today and should preach and live as he did, most of the world and many in the church would class him as a fanatic and refuse to have anything to do with him. While they looked upon Paul as foolish, they exalted themselves as being very wise. "The whole design of this irony is to show the folly of their boasted wisdom. That they only should be wise and prudent, and the apostles fools, was in the highest degree absurd; and this absurdity the apostle puts in a strong light by his irony." (Barnes.)

*We are weak, but ye are strong.* We cannot be sure in what this weakness of the apostles consisted. Some suggest that it was because they re-

lied on the use of spiritual weapons only and rejected the wisdom of the world and all instruments of human power. Others think Paul referred to his physical weaknesses, as the thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12: 7-10), or weak eyes (Gal. 4: 15; 6: 11), or his small stature. But since he includes others with himself, these personal characteristics can hardly be included. His patience, forbearance, and longsuffering were interpreted as signs of weakness rather than of strength. The soft Christian graces have ever been misunderstood and underestimated by those who glory in brute force and rely on coarse self-interest to gain their ends.

*We both hunger, and thirst.* Here Paul drops his ironical contrast and pictures some of the many things true preachers of the gospel endured to save lost souls. They were often without sufficient food and clothing, not because they did not have the ability to earn a living, but because they denied themselves these things in order to preach the gospel to the lost and train the infant churches. They were poor business men, but great servants of the Lord.

*Are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place.* The word buffet literally means a slap in the face. It suggests contempt as well as mistreatment and physical suffering. They could have no certain dwelling-place because of the nature of their work as well as because of having to flee many communities to save their lives. To be deprived of family life and the security of home is a great price to pay for serving the Lord, but Jesus promises that we shall be rewarded a hundredfold with eternal life. (Mark 10: 30.)

*Working with our own hands.* Paul often made his living and enough to help support other workers by manual labor, making tents. (1 Cor. 18: 3; Acts 20: 34; 1 Thess. 2: 9.) No preacher should be too proud or lazy to work with his hands to make a living while preaching the gospel, but churches should not be so stingy as to make it necessary for men to work with their hands when they could be preaching the gospel.

*Being reviled, we bless.* Paul testifies that the apostles followed the example of Jesus in returning good for evil. (Matt. 5: 38ff.) The reader should read Rom. 12: 14-21.

*We are made the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things.* By this he means that the world looks upon them as refuse and scum, something the community should rid itself of in order to be clean. Are we willing to suffer this in order to serve God?

## II. Exhortation to Imitate the Apostles (1 Cor. 4: 14-17)

*I Write not these things to shame you.* Though Paul had been sharp in the use of his irony, he had not done solely or primarily to make the brethren ashamed of themselves, but rather for the purpose of admonishing them as his beloved children. Parents often have to do and say things to their children which bring suffering for the moment, but no godly parents will do such things just to see the child suffer. But parents are willing to see the child suffer if such an experience will bring about the desired reformation. So Paul was willing to put them to shame if that would correct their evils.

*Though ye have ten thousand tutors in Christ.* The word for tutor is pedagogue-foot-man. The father put his son in charge of the pedagogue for protection and training. The pedagogue did not have fatherly rights over the son, regardless of how important his work was or how much it contributed to the welfare of the son. So Paul claims the rights of the father, the one who begot them through the gospel, while Apollos and all other later teachers were simply pedagogues in relation to the church at Corinth. Does Paul violate the teaching of Jesus that we shall call no man father? (Matt. 23: 9.) He refers to Timothy and Titus as his children in the gospel. (1 Tim. 1: 2; Tit. 1: 4.) Was it wrong for them to refer to him as their father in the gospel? This is not the use which Jesus condemns. Paul would never have called himself the father of people he had not converted; he did not wear the name as a title of an office or of distinction. He was their father only in that he preached the gospel, planted the seed of the kingdom in their hearts, which brought spiritual life to them.

*I begat you through the gospel.* The word for begat is the last word in Paul's sentence; it has no emphasis. As a servant of Jesus Christ by means of the gospel he had

brought them to life. When he said he planted and Apollos watered, he simply meant that in relation to Apollos he was the first worker and Apollos the second. So when he says he is the father and other men are the pedagogues, he simply means to say he planted the life-giving seed and others nurtured that plant which resulted from his planting. But here we see the importance of the gospel and the preaching of the word. Without seed there is no begetting; the gospel is the seed; therefore without the gospel there is no begetting, no spiritual life. James says we are begotten, brought forth, by the word of truth. (James 1: 18.) Peter says we are begotten by the incorruptible seed, the word of God, which by the gospel is preached unto us. (1 Pet. 1: 23-25.) Jesus says the word is the seed of the kingdom. (Luke 8: 11.) Without the seed of the kingdom planted into the hearts of men, the soil, there will be no sons of the kingdom. The idea of people being saved by direct miraculous power sent down from heaven in answer to prayer without the planting of the seed of the kingdom, which is the preaching of the gospel, is unscriptural and utterly foolish.

*Be ye imitators of me.* As a child should imitate his father in speech and action, so these Corinthians should imitate Paul because they had been begotten by him through the gospel. If they followed his example, they would not think of themselves as being filled and rich and as reigning while he was hungry and naked and suffering shame and reproach while preaching the gospel to them and others to save them from damnation. If they would imitate him, they would not be dividing the church into factions and exalting men as leaders of these factions, envying one another and seeking the downfall of each other.

*I have sent unto you Timothy.* Timothy was a young man Paul converted in Lystra, in Asia Minor, while he was on his first missionary journey. When Paul went back there on his second journey, Timothy joined the group and always thereafter either accompanied Paul or went to other places as Paul's representative and fellow-laborer. Paul speaks of Timothy as his "beloved and faithful child in the Lord." He also said, "I

have no man likeminded, who will care truly for your state. For they all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a child serveth a father, so he served with me in furtherance of the gospel." (Phil. 2: 20-22.) This is high praise and indicates a high degree of zeal, loyalty, and self-denial.

*Who shall put you in remembrance of my ways.* If the people were to imitate Paul, they must know what he taught and practiced; so Timothy was to put them in remembrance of Paul's teaching and practices. And Paul goes on to emphasize the fact that he was consistent in his teaching and practice, for he says he so taught in every church. He was not the kind who teaches what the listeners wish to hear and so might teach one thing here and something else at the next place. Human needs are the same everywhere; God's remedy for the ills of humanity are the same regardless of location, station in life, race or color; and the faithful minister of God will teach the same in every place.

### III. Paul Challenges His Critics (1 Cor. 4: 18-21)

*Now some are puffed up.* His critics were so inflated with their own importance and ability that they thought Paul was afraid to come to Corinth to face them, and for that reason he was sending Timothy. He anticipates a condition which he later described in these words: "For, His letters, they say, are weighty and strong; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account. Let such a one reckon this, that, what we are in word by letters when we are absent, such are we also in deed when we are present." (2 Cor. 10: 10, 11.) He hoped through his letters to correct the evil he heard existed so he would not have to use his apostolic power when he arrived. "For this cause I write these things while absent, that I may not when present deal sharply, according to the authority which the Lord gave me for building up, and not for casting down." (2 Cor. 13: 10.) Great men do not make unnecessary displays of their powers; only little men enjoy making displays of their abilities.

*But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will.* Pressing duties made

it impossible for him to go at that time, but his interest in the welfare of the church caused him to do the next best things, so he wrote them and sent his son in the gospel who would remind them of his teaching and life among them. The reader will notice that inspiration did not give Paul the power to see into the future to make his plans without possibility of change. Neither did inspiration enable Paul to make his plans without making them subject to the will of God. James rebukes all who make their plans without taking God into consideration. He says "that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that." (James 4: 15.)

*I will know, not the word of them that are puffed up, but the power.* This is Paul's challenge to his critics. They have accused him of being strong in speech and letters, but weak in the presence of opposition. They say he threatens to use apostolic authority but never will do so and hence implies that he does not possess it. He assures them that he is willing to be put to the test; he is willing to demonstrate his power. He also warns them that he will do so in such manner as to determine how much power they have. He is not concerned about their words, boasts, and threats, but he will test their power.

*The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.* This type of sentence is of frequent occurrence in the New Testament. In full the sentence should read, The kingdom of God is not in word *only*, but also in power. We have a similar sentence in Paul's instruction to Timothy: Be no longer a drinker of water *only*, but use a little wine *also* for thy stomach's sake. (1 Tim. 5: 23.) If the word *only* is not supplied, we would have to conclude that Paul forbade Timothy to drink water in any amount. So if the word *only* is not supplied in our text, we would have to conclude that the kingdom of God is not in word at all, and that is not true. The word is the seed of the kingdom. (Luke 8: 11.) The word is the sword of the Spirit. (Eph. 6: 17.) So the kingdom of God has an inseparable connection with words; the kingdom

cannot be preached without the use of words. But Paul contended that his critics had words only; they could not demonstrate with power from God, hence the kingdom was not with them. Those who use this verse to belittle the effectiveness of gospel preaching and to prove the necessity of direct miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit make Paul affirm a falsehood in the first clause of the statement. The kingdom could never have been established without words, but words alone would never have established it. The kingdom could not have been governed and disciplined without words, but words alone were not sufficient for the task in apostolic days when spiritual gifts were required for the growth and preservation of the church. It was this apostolic power which Paul had and threatened to use against his critics, and which he denied that they possessed.

*Shall I come unto you with a rod?* Paul leaves it to the church to decide whether he comes to discipline or to comfort. To come with a rod simply means that he will use his apostolic authority to bring about such reforms as are needful in the church. Those who would dare to oppose his authority would suffer whatever punishment God would lead Paul to administer. Elymas was struck blind for a season. (Acts 13: 8-11.) Though Paul possessed such power, he much preferred to use it for building up than for tearing down. (2 Cor. 13: 10.)

*In love and a spirit of gentleness.* This was more in keeping with Paul's disposition. He hoped the church at Corinth would take care of its own disciplinary problems. He gave directions for settling them and deferred his coming to give them time to get them settled so he would not have to use the rod. But he leaves no doubt as to his ability and willingness to use the rod if it became necessary to save the church. This gives us an estimate of the value Paul put on the church. It was so great and valuable he was willing to do anything, that was right regardless of how distasteful, to save it.

### Lessons to Learn

1. We enjoy many blessings at a fearful price. Our national freedom

has been purchased with the blood of our patriots. The blessings of the

gospel were first purchased with the blood of Jesus, but have been distributed at the price of immeasurable sufferings on the part of apostles and preachers who loved the Lord enough to imitate him.

2. Paul exhorts us to imitate him in his sufferings for the glory of the Lord and the salvation of lost souls. How much have you suffered? Can you compare your sufferings with those of Paul? Some of us are not willing to deny ourselves the luxuries

and pleasures of life to save a soul. If imitation of Paul is a condition of salvation, how can we expect to be saved unless we suffer with him?

3. Spiritual life is begotten in our hearts by the gospel. If some one had not preached the gospel to us, we could not have enjoyed spiritual life. It also follows that if we do not preach the gospel to others, they will never enjoy spiritual life. What a wonderful opportunity! What a fearful responsibility!

### Questions for the Class

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

#### Golden Text Explained

Can you cite other verses where Paul exhorts people to imitate him?  
State and discuss three things in which we should imitate Paul.  
State three things said about the value of imitation.  
What use do Bible writers make of learning by imitation?  
To what extent are we limited in our imitation of Paul?  
Wherein is the wisdom of this limitation?  
What responsibility do we have in view of others imitating us?

#### Introduction

What does Paul say about the matter of judging?  
What does he teach us about going beyond things written?  
What is irony? and what use does Paul make of it in our lesson?

#### State of the Apostles

In what rank does Paul say the apostles were classed?  
To what were the apostles doomed? and why?  
What is the meaning of the word spectacle as used in our text?  
How would a man of Paul's zeal and self-sacrifice be classed today?  
In what way was Paul weak? and what are the soft graces which the world mistakes for weakness?  
To what extent did Paul practice self-denial in order to preach to the lost?  
Is it right for preachers to work with their hands today to make a living?

What does Paul teach about returning good for evil?  
What picture is suggested by the word offscouring?

#### Exhortation to Imitate the Apostles

What was Paul's purpose in writing our text?  
What is the meaning of the word tutor? and how was he related to the father of his pupil?  
What does Jesus teach about the use of the word father?  
Did Paul violate his teaching?  
How does our text emphasize the necessity of preaching the gospel?  
Can you name some changes which imitation of Paul would make in the church at Corinth?  
What do you know of Timothy and his relationship to Paul?  
What service was Timothy to render the church at Corinth?

#### Paul Challenges His Critics

Why were the Corinthians puffed up?  
What accusations did Paul's critics bring against him?  
Can you show how Paul took the Lord into consideration when he made his plans?  
How does Paul state his challenge to his critics?  
Is there any sense in which the kingdom of God is in word?  
Can you illustrate the form of this statement to show its full meaning?  
How has this verse been abused by religious teachers of this age?  
What is meant by coming with a rod?  
What in Paul's statement shows his high valuation of the church?  
~~What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?~~

## Lesson III—January 15, 1956

### A CASE OF DISCIPLINE

#### Lesson Text

1 Cor. 5: 1-13

1 It is actually reported that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not even among the Gen'tiles, that one *of you* hath his father's wife.

2 And ye are puffed up, and did not rather mourn, that he that had done this deed might be taken away from among you.

3 For I verily, being absent in

body but present in spirit, have already as though I were present judged him that hath so wrought this thing,

4 In the name of our Lord Je'-sus, ye being gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Je'-sus,

5 To deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Je'-sus.

6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?

7 Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, even as ye are unleavened. For our passover also hath been sacrificed, *even* Christ:

8 Wherefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but

with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

9 I wrote unto you in my epistle to have no company with fornicators;

10 Not at all *meaning* with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous and extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world:

11 But as it is, I wrote unto you not to keep company, if any man that is named a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no, not to eat.

12 For what have I to do with judging them that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within?

13 But them that are without God judgeth. Put away the wicked man from among yourselves.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Put away the wicked man from among yourselves."* (1 Cor. 5: 13b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Thess. 3: 6-15.

### Daily Bible Readings

January 9.	M	Light and Darkness Opposed (1 John 2: 7-11)
January 10.	T	Avoid Fellowship Works of Darkness (Eph. 5: 1-14)
January 11.	W	Come Out from Among Them (2 Cor. 6: 14-17)
January 12.	T	Love Not the World (1 John 2: 15-17)
January 13.	F	Abstain from All Evil (1 Thess. 5: 15-22)
January 14.	S	No Fellowship in Darkness (1 John 1: 5-10)
January 15.	S	Some to Be Marked (Rom. 16: 17-20)

TIME.—A. D. 57.

PLACE.—Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints in Corinth.

### Golden Text Explained

1. Discipline demanded. In our efforts to restore primitive Christianity churches of Christ have made their greatest failure in the matter of discipline. We have restored the plan of salvation from alien sins so that we can tell people what to do to be saved and can give them the verses of scripture which authorize each step. We have restored the primitive items of worship and can give a "Thus saith the Lord" for everything we do. But very little effort has been made to administer discipline for sin and unfaithfulness in spite of the fact that the Lord demands such of his people. (a) Baptism and the Lord's supper are not more plainly taught than is our duty to put wicked people away from the church in the

verse we use for our text this week. A man had taken his father's wife and thought it was a smart thing to do. Paul commanded the church to discipline him. In verse 11, other sins are named as being in the same category with this sin. Surely Paul did not pick out this one sin for discipline and suggest that other sins do not demand discipline, (b) To the church in Thessalonica Paul wrote that they were to withdraw themselves from every brother who walks disorderly. (2 Thess. 3: 6.) And disorderly conduct is described as that which is contrary to the teaching of the apostles, (c) Paul demands that we mark and turn away from all who cause divisions over doctrine contrary to that of the apostles. So we

see that ungodly conduct is not the only cause for discipline. Unscriptural teaching may be as destructive in the church as ungodly conduct.

2. Examples of discipline. Old Testament examples, which are written for our admonition (1 Cor. 10: 6, 11), show us how the Lord demanded discipline among his people of old. (a) Jehovah commanded his people to remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. (Ex. 20: 8.) Some time afterward a man gathered sticks on the Sabbath. He was brought to Moses for punishment. Jehovah told Moses to have the people to stone him to death. (Num. 15: 32-36.) If we think this was drastic, we should remember that we sinners cannot appreciate the holiness of the law and seriousness of violating that law except as we see God's attitude toward such. (b) Another man disregarded the Lord's instruction with reference to the spoil of Jericho. (Josh. 6, 7.) On account of this sin Jehovah could not be with the people, and they lost the battle of Ai. Achan was found guilty and was stoned to death. (c) But some one may be ready to say that these things happened in a former dispensation and that the Lord does not now so punish sin. However, soon after the establishment of the church we find Ananias and Sapphira telling a lie about the amount of money they received for property which they sold. (Acts 5: 1-11.) They fell dead as a consequence of this sin. This shows that God's attitude toward sin is the same and his demand for discipline is as

great under the gospel as under the law.

3. Purpose of discipline. (a) To save the sinner. Eternal death is the penalty for sin. (Rom. 6: 23; Rev. 21: 8.) If one is allowed to continue in his sin, he can never have any part in the everlasting kingdom. (Gal. 5: 23; 1 Cor. 6: 9, 10; 2 Pet. 1: 5-11.) Discipline is for the purpose of showing the sinner that he is unfit for heaven until he turns from his sin. (b) To save the church from infection. Sin may be viewed as an infection which will spread from one member of the body to all others if the sinner is allowed to continue fellowship in the body. When one member of the body becomes infected, it is sometimes necessary to lose that member to save the body. (c) To maintain the respect of the world. Often we hear church leaders say they do not exercise discipline because the church will be hurt in the eyes of the world if the world learns that there is trouble in the church. The world will have a lot more respect for the church if it is trying to keep itself clean than it will have for a church which tries to hide its sin. People magnified the church and believers were added to the Lord because of the discipline of Ananias and Sapphira. (Acts. 5: 13, 14.) When a man of the world can truthfully say that he lives a better, cleaner life than the average church member, or when he can truthfully say there are too many hypocrites in the church, we may know that the church is not exercising discipline as it should.

### Introduction

It should be remembered that the church at Corinth was predominantly a Gentile group and that they had but recently been converted from heathenism. It should also be remembered that the goddess Venus had a temple in Corinth and that fornication was a part of the ritual in that worship. So common was immorality in Corinth that a person guilty of the practice was said to be *Corinthianized*, or playing the part of a Corinthian. Getting people to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Saviour from sin is one thing and getting them to break clean with all heathen habits and appreciate the

high moral standards of the gospel is quite another thing. The first does not require a lot of time or self-denial; the latter takes much more time and requires a complete surrender of one's will to the Lord in spite of old habits and the desires of the flesh which are continually demanding satisfaction. So a person in the social environment of Corinth had a much more difficult task of living in harmony with the moral standards of the gospel than those of some other communities. The Jews of Jerusalem had their peculiar trials, but they were not beset with the moral problems of the Corinthians.

Discipline is sometimes neglected because people have the idea that they must be perfect before they can administer discipline. But it should be remembered that Paul told the church at Corinth to put away the man who had sinned and yet those who were to do the putting away were not perfect either in life or doctrine. His criticisms of the church and his instructions make it very

plain that the rest of the church members were far from perfection. But they were not guilty of that sin and were commanded to put away the one who was guilty. Certainly we must not be guilty of sins as bad as the one we are going to discipline, but that does not mean that one must be perfect before he can take part in the discipline.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Paul Teaches Discipline (1 Cor. 5: 1-5)

*It is actually reported.* People are all alike in that they try to hide their sins. The church at Corinth wrote Paul about marriage problems (1 Cor. 7: 1), yet they did not mention this case of incest. He had to learn that from some other source than their letter to him.

*Such fornication as is not even among the Gentiles.* Those who climb the highest can seemingly fall to the lowest depths. The Lord's people who should be manifesting the life of Jesus in their mortal bodies (2 Cor. 4: 10, 11), so far from being a worthy example for the heathen to follow, had actually become guilty of a sin which the heathen deplored. Moses forbade such an incestuous connection as this in Corinth. (Lev. 17: 8; Deut. 27: 20.) And Greek and Roman writers are cited as deploring such a connection in marriage. It is bad enough for the church to imitate the world in its sins, but worse when the church leads the way and teaches the world a lesson in wickedness.

*One of you hath his father's wife.* Since the woman is not condemned, it is most probable that she was not a Christian, did not claim to be a member of the church. In this situation we have a man married the second time and he married a woman too near the age of his son. We conclude that this was a second marriage, for certainly the son did not marry his mother. And the son either had never married or was not then living with his wife. The father's wife and son being near the same age, and the son being more attractive to the woman than the older man, led to the separation of the older man and his wife and her marriage to the son. Some argue that the woman and the son had not mar-

ried, but lived in such criminal intimacy that it was known to all the community. This is putting the matter in its worst possible light and it is difficult to conceive of the church, as bad as it was, condoning such a condition. The most charitable view to take of the matter is that presented above—the boy simply took the woman away from his father and married her. Some have suggested that the old man died and the boy married his young widow, but from Paul's second letter we learn that the father was still alive. (2 Cor. 7: 12.)

*And ye are puffed up.* It is difficult to determine why the church was puffed up. To be puffed up means to be proud, to have vain conceit. Were they proud of the young man for being able to take his father's wife away from him? Or were they proud of their spiritual condition in spite of the fact they knew of this incest among them? The latter seems more probable, yet the former certainly is not impossible. "They should have mourned; and should have given their first attention to the removal of the evil. But instead of this, they had given indulgence to proud feeling, and had become elated with a vain confidence in their spiritual purity. Men are always elated and proud when they have the least occasion for it." (Barnes.)

*Absent in body but present in spirit.* Some have imagined that Paul intended some miraculous spiritual presence. But the statement means no more than that on account of his bodily presence being impossible he would be present in spirit with his judgment to encourage and lead the way for the church to do its duty. Expressing his judgment in the letter, the people would know his mind; he had conveyed his mind by means of this letter.

*Have already . . . judged him.* In contrast with their negligence to do what God and decency demanded in this case, Paul rendered swift judgment on the offender. His swiftness would have a tendency to cause them to realize the enormity of the sin and would encourage them to do their duty without further delay.

*In the name of our Lord Jesus.* This expression means by the authority of Jesus. So according to Paul, we have the authority of Jesus to withdraw from the ungodly. Do we dare to refuse to do that which Jesus authorizes?

*Ye being gathered together.* Since this is addressed to the church, we conclude that the assembled church took part in the discipline of this ungodly man. Undoubtedly the elders of the church presided, took the lead, in the action; but the whole church concurred in the action taken. Since children become members of the church at such an early age, it would not be wise to conclude those under the age of maturity in such cases as this one, but all mature people are entitled to know the facts because they will be expected to concur in the action of the church in making the one disciplined feel his lost condition.

*To deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh.* To deliver to Satan was simply to exclude from the fellowship of the church. Since there are but two spiritual kingdoms, it follows that when one is excluded from the kingdom of God that one is back in the kingdom of Satan. In that sense he is delivered to Satan. If he remains there, never returns to the kingdom of God by repentance, he will be lost forever. The destruction of the flesh in this verse has given rise to much speculation. Some think Paul was recommending some miraculous punishment like that of Ananias and Sapphira, or Elymas (Acts 13: 6-11), but such could not be an example for the church this side of the age of miracles. The statement does not imply that Satan will destroy the man's flesh. So the statement simply means that the ungodly man was to be excluded from the fellowship of the church, thrown back under the reign of Satan, so that he might be brought to his senses and might be influenced to destroy the lusts of his flesh so

that he might be saved in the day the Lord comes to judge the world.

## II. Church at Corinth Corrected (1

Cor. 5: 6-8)

*Your glorying is not good.* It is never good for poor sinful man to glory, even when, like Paul (1 Cor. 4: 4), he knows nothing against himself. But the glorying of this church was especially out of place when the people knew of this case of incest among them.

*A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.* Jesus used leaven to teach power of the influence of the kingdom of God in the world. (Matt. 13: 33.) Both good and evil will spread and change that with which it comes in contact. The kingdom of God planted in an evil environment has the power to change that environment into its own likeness if that power is aggressive. So evil has a tendency to change all about it into its nature. So Paul warns the church not to allow this evil to continue undisturbed among them lest the whole church be contaminated. Elders of churches today should take warning and begin to lead the church to take discipline against ungodliness lest this leaven of evil among us leaven the whole lump, or contaminate the whole church.

*Purge out the old leaven.* Just before the passover all Jews were to gather all the leaven they could find in their houses and throw it away, and then the feast could be celebrated with unleavened bread. So Paul speaks of evil as leaven and urges them to put it all away so that they may be a new lump. The new lump is that meal or flour into which the new leaven is put. But until the leaven is placed in it the lump is looked upon as pure. So Paul urges them to be as pure as a new lump into which no leaven of evil has been allowed to come.

*For our passover also hath been sacrificed, even Christ.* Our passover has been sacrificed, but must not be partaken of in the presence of evil. So as the Jews were to put away all old leaven that they might partake of their passover, so we are to put away all evil that we may partake of our passover. But our passover is sacrificed only once and that for all time to come; it is a continual sacrifice. Hence we are obligated con-

tinually to keep the leaven of evil from working among us.

*Let us keep the feast.* This does not mean that we are to keep a feast like that of the passover; nor does it refer to the Lord's supper. It simply means that we are to partake of Christ, who is our passover, in the sense of partaking of his spiritual life, his divine nature, and his holy character. This we cannot do as long as there is evil in us; nor can a church so partake of Christ and manifest him to the world as long as ungodly people are allowed or encouraged to be in the membership.

*Not with old leaven.* This old leaven refers to the former manner of life when we were the servants of sin. We cannot keep this holy feast with this old manner of life as our pattern of conduct. As long as the church at Corinth allowed this man guilty of incest to remain in its fellowship, they were trying to keep the feast with old leaven.

*Neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness.* The term "old leaven" is general, but Paul gets down to specific terms and says we are not to partake of Christ our passover with the leaven of malice in our hearts. We are guilty of malice when our words and actions are determined by hatred or spite. There are many who would not think of stooping to the sin of incest as did this man at Corinth, but yet they will do things for spite. This lesson suggests that one who does such spiteful things has no more right to partake of our passover than has the man guilty of incest. Lusts of the flesh seem a lot worse to us than lusts of the mind, but Jesus taught us that one puts us as much in need of the love and mercy of God as the other. He pictured the elder brother as much in need of the love of his father as was the prodigal son. (Luke 15.) The elder brother was guilty of lusts of the mind and the prodigal was guilty of satisfying the lusts of his flesh. So we need to keep the leaven of malice out of our hearts as well as the lust of the flesh.

*Unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.* We are to partake of our passover, Christ, sincerely and according to truth. There can be no hypocrisy in our feasting on Christ; it must be from the heart.

### III. Separation from the Ungodly (1

Cor. 5: 9-13)

*I wrote unto you in my epistle.* This refers to an epistle Paul wrote some time before he wrote the one we now study, and which has not been preserved. The notion that everything an inspired man wrote must of necessity be preserved in order to have a complete revelation is as foolish as to think that every word and deed of Jesus should have been preserved and recorded that we might have a full revelation of him, or of God through him. But John plainly tells us that we do not have such a complete record. (John 21: 25.) We might as well contend that every word spoken by the apostles has to be preserved as to argue that every word they wrote must be preserved.

*Have no company with fornicators.* This first letter must have been written shortly before he wrote the one we now study, or the church did not obey the instructions given in it, for they did not cease to have company with this young man who took his father's wife.

*Not at all meaning with the fornicators of this world.* This statement suggests that the church did not get the idea Paul intended. It is clearly indicated here that they thought he meant for them to have no company with any fornicators whether in the church or in the world. Missing the point as they did may explain why they had done nothing about it. Paul's informers, of the household of Chloe, must have told Paul that the church made no distinction between fornicators of the world and those in the church. So Paul takes pains to make the matter so clear no one can misunderstand.

*For then must ye needs go out of the world.* If we are to refrain from all social intercourse with people who are guilty of such sins, we will have to leave this world. Some association with such characters is essential (1) to transaction of necessary business; (2) for civic improvements; (3) to secure an education; and (4) to teach them the truth and lead them to Christ. But we should not make them our bosom companions and trusted friends lest we be corrupted by their sins. (1 Cor. 15: 33.) Jesus associated with them enough to teach and influence them to turn

from their sins, but when he wanted companionship he found it with such people as his disciples and in such homes as that of Lazarus and his sisters of Bethany.

*If any man that is named a brother,* Paul intended for the church to get the idea that his rule of separation from the ungodly should be applied to those only who are members of the church, those we call brethren. If they are guilty of fornication, we are to have no company with them, except to admonish them as erring brothers. (2 Thess. 3: 15.) And going to them to admonish them to turn from their sins can hardly be classed as having company with them.

*Covetous . . . idolater . . . reviler . . . drunkard . . . extortioner.* The student should consult a dictionary if he is not sure of the exact meaning of these terms. This list is not meant to be complete. The list of the works of the flesh (Gal. 5: 19-21) contains these and many others and yet it ends with "and such like." Any sin which will keep one out of heaven might well be put in this catalog. These sins are unbecoming in a child of God; they unfit one for heaven and so render him unfit for fellowship and communion with those who are preparing themselves to go to heaven.

*With such a one no, not to eat.* This serves to explain what is meant by having no company with the ungodly. There has been some differences of opinion whether Paul means to eat the Lord's supper or the common meal. He demands that the

church withdraw from, put away, such a person and this would include the eating of the Lord's supper. The eating here in mind is such that one could well do with a sinner of the world, but which we must not do with sinners in the church. Certainly we do not eat the Lord's supper with sinners of the world, so Paul could not have had the eating of the Lord's supper in mind. You may have company with, even eat with, fornicators and revilers of this world, but you may not have company with, no not even eat with, a brother who is a fornicator, etc. The eating under consideration here is that which we may practice with sinners of the world, therefore the common meal. If Christians would practice this with reference to all who have divorced for trivial reasons and married again in violation of the Lord's law (Matt. 19: 9; 1 Cor. 7: 10, 11), we might save a lot of people from being lost on account of unlawful marriages.

*Do not ye judge them that are within?* The word *without* refers to people who are not members of the church, and the word *within* refers to those who are members of the church. Paul leaves the judgment of those without to the Lord, but says we have the duty of judging those within. Certainly this does not refer to final judgment, but to the discipline of the church which it must exercise on those who are guilty of such sins as are named here. When they put away the wicked man from among them and refused to eat with him, they had exercised all the judgment which Paul demanded of them.

### Lessons to Learn

1. Pride goes before a fall. The church at Corinth was headed for a fall because of their pride which ignored their sin. None of us has enough good in himself to be proud: all of us have sufficient frailty and sinfulness in us to humble us if we will but recognize and confess it.

2. If the church does not exercise more discipline in the future than in the past fifty years, the area of separation between the church and the world will be so narrow that it will be difficult to see. We have been careful to maintain doctrinal purity

and the correct pattern of organization, but we have shamefully neglected to maintain the moral standards of the New Testament church.

3. When the church puts away a wicked man, each member of the church is to agree and cooperate with the church by refusing all social intercourse with that person, even to the point of refusing to eat with him, so that he may be brought to a realization of his lost condition and may repent of his sins and return to the Lord.

### Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?  
 Repeat the memory verse.  
 Give the time, place, and persons.

#### Golden Text Explained

Can we say we have completely restored the New Testament church? Why?  
 Can you give scriptures which authorize church discipline?  
 Can you name a cause for discipline other than immoral conduct?  
 Can you give some Old Testament examples of discipline?  
 Do we have a New Testament example of discipline?  
 State and discuss three reasons for discipline.

#### Introduction

What social conditions in Corinth contributed to the low standard of morals of the church?  
 Must one be perfect morally before that one can discipline one who is immoral?  
 What proof can you give for your answer to the preceding question?

#### Paul Teaches Discipline

How did Paul learn of this case of incest in Corinth?  
 What was the attitude of Moses toward such a sin?  
 Was this sin common among the heathen?  
 Of what did this man's sin consist?  
 Was his father still alive?  
 Of what does Paul accuse the church of being proud?  
 What did Paul mean by being present in spirit?  
 Can you show that discipline in such cases is authorized by the Lord?  
 Is it ever safe to neglect or refuse to do that which is authorized by the Lord?  
 Can you prove that the whole church was to take part in the discipline?  
 What is meant by delivering one to Satan?  
 What is destruction of the flesh?

#### Church at Corinth Corrected

Why is glorying not good? and especially in this case at Corinth?  
 What lesson does Paul teach by the mention of leaven?  
 What Jewish practice is suggested by purging out the old leaven?  
 What is our passover?  
 Why does this suggest continual absence of the leaven of evil?  
 What is meant by our keeping the feast?  
 What is the old leaven?  
 When are we guilty of malice?  
 How does this affect our relation to the Lord?  
 What does Jesus teach about the lusts of the mind as compared with the lusts of the flesh?  
 What is meant by unleavened bread of sincerity and truth?

#### Separation from the Ungodly

How many letters did Paul write to the church at Corinth?  
 Can you show that it was not necessary for all the writings of apostles to be preserved?  
 What idea did the church get from Paul's first letter about associating with fornicators?  
 Name some necessary associations with fornicators and other evil men of the world.  
 How did Jesus set us an example in this matter?  
 Discuss other sins which should be disciplined by the church.  
 Can you prove that we are not to eat the common meal with the ungodly brother?  
 Has this church restored the primitive church discipline as taught in this lesson? Why?  
 What is meant by judging them that are within?  
 What is there of interest to you in "lessons to learn"?

### Lesson IV—January 22, 1956

## QUESTIONS FROM CORINTH ABOUT MARRIAGE

### Lesson Text

1 Now concerning <sup>1 Cor. 7: 1-5,</sup> the things <sup>10-15,</sup> which ye wrote, <sup>39, 40</sup> I pray, and may be together again, whereof ye wrote: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. that Satan tempt you not because of your incontinency.

2 But, because of fornications, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.

3 Let the husband render unto the wife her due: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

4 The wife hath not power over her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power over his own body, but the wife.

5 Defraud ye not one the other, except it be by consent for a season, that ye may give yourselves unto

10 But unto the married I give charge, *yea* not I, but the Lord, That the wife depart not from her husband

11 (But should she depart, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband); and that the husband leave not his wife.

12 But to the rest say I, not the Lord: If any brother hath an unbelieving wife, and she is content to dwell with him, let him not leave her.

13 And the woman that hath an

unbelieving husband, and he is content to dwell with her, let her not leave her husband.

14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

15 Yet if the unbelieving departeth, let him depart: the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such

cases: but God hath called us in peace.

39 A wife is bound for so long time as her husband liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is free to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.

40 But she is happier if she abide as she is, after my judgment: and I think that I also have the Spirit of God.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of Jehovah."* (Prov. 18: 22.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gen. 2: 18-25.

### Daily Bible Readings

January 16.	M.	Parable of a Marriage Feast (Matt. 22: 2-14)
January 17.	T.	Angels do not Marry (Luke 20: 27-36)
January 18.	W.	Jesus Attends a Marriage Supper (John 2: 1-11)
January 19.	T.	Marriage and Divorce (Matt. 5: 32; 19: 1-9)
January 20.	F.	Wife Bound to Her Husband (Rom. 7: 1-7)
January 21.	S.	Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19: 1-10)
January 22.	S.	Marriage Is Honorable (Heb. 13: 1-4)

TIME.—A. D. 57.

PLACE.—Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints at Corinth.

### Golden Text Explained

1. Finding a wife. Our text speaks of a man *finding* a wife, and it has ever been the custom of practically all nations everywhere for man to take the lead in the matter of courtship and marriage. When a Christian man begins to look for a wife, he should have certain standards or requirements in mind, (a) No Christian man, young or old, should give any thought to marrying a woman who is not a Christian. Yes, all of us know of Christians who have married out of the church and the union was happy and successful; but on the other hand all of us know of more cases where it did not work out so well. Does any father wish for his children to be born of and trained by a child of the devil? That is the bluntest way the matter can be stated, yet it is the naked truth which all must face. If a mother is not a Christian, she is a child of the devil. And the matter is too serious to take chances on converting the bride before she becomes the mother of your children, (b) When looking for a wife, a man should consider backgrounds. Does the woman have the same racial backgrounds? Mingling

of races is difficult especially so for the children of some combinations. Does she have the same, or similar, social backgrounds? One's social standing does not make any difference in his relationship to the Lord, but it does affect his chances of attaining peace, harmony, and happiness in the home. Does she come from a home in similar financial circumstances? A poor girl marrying a rich man, or a girl from a rich family marrying a poor boy, may find it difficult to adapt herself to the new situation, (c) A man should look for a woman who has the ability to adapt herself to varying conditions and circumstances and be happy when in adversity as well as in prosperity. Some men have married a beautiful face or a melodious voice and later became aware of the fact that he had tied himself to a most ugly disposition. "Grace is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth Jehovah, she shall be praised." (Prov. 31: 30.)

2. Find a good thing, (a) She is good for the man. God saw it was not good for man to be alone, so he gave him a wife. (Gen. 2: 18.) "She

doeth him good and not evil all the days of her life." (Prov. 31: 12.) Man needs intelligent and sympathetic companionship which cannot be found in any other creature, (b) She is good for his children. God has ordained the family unit for bearing and rearing children. Man has attempted to change it in various ways, but he has never found anything better either for parents or children. A godly mother in the home, faithful to her duty, insures well-mannered and morally upright children; if she is a Christian and does her duty, her children will be Christians, (c) She is good for society. The nation, community, and the home are indebted to the wives and mothers for most of the good there is in the world today. Of course it is impossible to visualize conditions in society where there are no mothers, or where there are no fathers. But if children were born and then taken away from the mothers and given to the state to rear, we would soon see the value of

mothers in the society of the home, community, and nation.

3. Obtains favor of Jehovah, (a) Our text says when a man finds a wife he obtains favor of Jehovah. One favor, or blessing, is the full enjoyment, limited only by his capacity, of his emotional nature. Pure love soars the heights and sounds the depths of man's emotional nature with unbounded freedom only in the relationship of marriage, (b) Man enjoys the greatest sense of peace and security only when he shares a home with his Christian wife. The frowns and persecutions of an unfriendly world will have but little effect on a man who can share his troubles with a faithful and sympathetic wife, (c) Another favor of Jehovah to the man who has a Christian wife is the love and respect of his offspring. Children to honor him and follow in his footsteps, to perpetuate his name and his memory for generations yet to come are favors the worth of which is incalculable.

### Introduction

Teaching of very few subjects is laden with as grave responsibilities and serious consequences as this subject of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Next to how to become a Christian and live the Christian life, this subject determines the eternal destinies of as many people as any other. Since preachers and teachers of the word disagree on what is the Lord's will in this matter, it is possible for people to be lost on account of an unlawful marriage without being conscious of it. And since these preachers and teachers are telling people things positively contradictory to one another, it follows that some of these men are leading people to be lost. If I assure a couple that their marriage is lawful in the sight of God when it is not, and they take my word for it and continue to live in that unlawful relationship, I will be the cause of their condemnation in the judgment. How many such mistakes can I make-how many people can I send to torment, and still be saved? We should use extreme caution on this subject.

There is a tendency to say that an unbending application of the strict legal statement of the law of the Lord

would demand that a certain couple cease to live in the unlawful union, but our conception of the mercy and sympathy of the Lord is such that we feel sure he will not condemn them for continuing to live in that union, especially when a number of innocent children are involved. Since when does man have the right to cease to plead the law in the case, become the judge and dispense the mercy of God according to his own will? Our religious neighbors admit that the Bible teaches baptism for the remission of sins, but their conception of the mercy and goodness of God will not allow them to think he will condemn a person for not being baptized, especially if his mother reared him to think it unnecessary. It is our duty to learn the law concerning marriage and to live in harmony with it. If God's mercy allows some slight infractions of it, we will be safe; if his mercy does not allow slight infractions of it, we will still be safe. To presume on his mercy is unsafe; to do so willfully is disastrous. Let us teach what the law of the Lord says and leave the dispensation of his mercy to the Lord who does all things well.

## Exposition of the Text

### I. Relation of Husband and Wife (1

Cor. 7: 1-5)

*Concerning the things whereof ye wrote.* Up to this point Paul has been writing about things he had learned from others about conditions of the church at Corinth. (1 Cor. 1: 11; 5: 1.) He now begins to deal with matters called to his attention by a letter from the church. The first question was about marriage and seems to have raised the question whether marriage was good or bad, to be avoided or enjoyed.

*It is good for a man not to touch a woman.* The word *touch* is used in the sense of marry. If we were to take this statement without any limitations, we would make Paul contradict the Lord who said it is not good for man to be alone. (Gen. 2: 18.) And if Paul wrote Hebrews, we would have him contradicting himself when he said marriage is to be had in honor among all. (Heb. 13: 4.) Furthermore, he compares the relationship of Christ and the church to that of the husband and wife (Eph. 5: 23ff.), which he could not have done if he held that marriage is not good. This statement is to be taken in the light of the world conditions suggested later in the chapter. (Verses 26, 29ff.)

*But, because of fornications.* The sense here is that in order to avoid fornication people should marry, even in spite of these world conditions which may bring unusual sufferings upon people with dependent children. Immorality in many forms was prevalent in Corinth, and many of the Christians had recently come out of heathen religions which made use of immorality in their religious ceremonies, so Paul advises marriage as a safeguard against a return to such practices to satisfy the natural desires of the body. Women are advised to have their own husbands for the same reason.

*Let the husband render unto the wife her due.* Paul says the husband should give the wife that which is due her, and the wife should give the husband that which is his due. In general this means that they are to be solicitous of each other's welfare and to protect each other from temptations to satisfy the longings of the body outside of the marriage rela-

tionship. These *drives, urges*, of the body are God-given and are not to be looked upon as sinful or unholy. There were two extremes of Gnostic philosophy current in Paul's day. "Ascetic Gnostics, therefore, strove to destroy by severity every carnal impulse; antinomian Gnostics argued that the life of the spirit was so utterly independent of the flesh that what the flesh did was of no consequence." (Pulpit Commentary.) The ascetic branch of the Gnostics held that the body and all its desires are unholy and were to be curbed in order to advance the development of the spirit. This finally led to the monasteries of the middle ages and to practice of celibacy among the clergy of the Roman Catholic Church.

*The wife hath not power over her own body.* The Greek word for *power* in this verse means authority to do as one pleases. So Paul teaches us that in marriage we surrender to each other the right or authority over our physical bodies. The pleasure and necessity of the husband is the law that governs the wife's body, and the pleasure and necessity of the wife is the law that governs the husband's body. Paul is dealing with an extremely delicate subject, and it is difficult for the commentator to be plainer than Paul on the subject without becoming indelicate and coarse.

*Defraud ye not one the other.* In verse three Paul had said that each is to render to the other what is due, and now he implies that one will be defrauded if the other does not render that which is due. However, he limits this demand by saying that it may be for a season, a time provided the consent of the other may be gained.

*That ye may give yourselves unto prayer.* This is not to be taken to mean that regular family devotions are impossible except during periods of continence. The practice of celibacy on the part of Catholic priests is based on the erroneous idea that continence or incontinency detracts from holiness to the point of making effective prayers difficult. The prayer of this verse is a time of special devotion, as seasons of sorrow or anxiety for the welfare of loved ones, times which

consume the mental and physical energies of an individual.

*And may be together again.* That you may resume the normal relations of husband and wife, rendering to each his due. The whole tenor of this context suggests that the time of continence should not be prolonged; that it is unsafe in the average family for this season to be extended indefinitely.

*That Satan tempt you not because of your incontinency.* Satan will take advantage of your lack of self-restraint and cause you to seek illicit satisfaction. This should prove to us that Satan knows when we are in position to be tempted and that he is seeking for opportunities to lead us into sin. He is the enemy of the home, as well as of everything else that is from God. Marriage is the natural state. The enforced celibacy of the clergy and the scandals coming out of that situation prove the wisdom of God in saying that it is not good for man to be alone.

## II. Concerning Separation (1 Cor. 7: 10-15)

*But unto the married I give charge.* Paul makes this statement as strong as possible, first by the use of the word *charge*, order, and next he says that not only he orders this, but Jesus Christ.

*That the wife depart not from her husband.* The same applies to the husband as is seen in the last phrase of the verse. Some have supposed that Paul put the emphasis on the woman because she might be inclined to abuse her new-found liberties in the gospel. However, since the Corinthian church was largely Gentile this does not carry much weight. But when did the Lord say that there should be no separation? His teaching on this point is found in his conversation with the Pharisees on divorce. (Matt. 19: 3-12.) In this lesson he limited divorce and remarriage to one cause, fornication. All who divorced for any other reason and marry again commit adultery. Paul did not mention the one exception because fornication was not under consideration as a cause for divorce.

*Let her remain unmarried.* Paul first says there should be no separations. This is for the safety and happiness of both parties. But if the

two cannot live together in peace; if they are so incompatible that they cannot possibly cultivate and maintain a Christlike disposition, they may separate. It is better for people to live separate in this life and go to heaven when it is over than for them to live together in sinful strife and enmity and go to hell when life is over.

*Or else be reconciled to her husband.* If two separate for any reason except fornication, they may never marry others. If they find that their need of companionship is too great, they may become reconciled to each other. Seeing their need of each other may make them more tolerant of the weaknesses and peculiarities which they once thought they could not bear. Since Paul says this is the teaching of the Lord and the only recorded teaching of Jesus is Matt. 5: 31, 32; 19: 3-12, and related passages, we should view these passages in the light of Paul's statement and not reach any conclusions contrary to what is said here.

*To the rest say, I not the Lord.* Paul does not mean to say that his teaching is not inspired, but simply that he is not repeating a lesson which Jesus taught while on earth. The expression *the rest* refers to Christians who have unbelieving spouses. This is obvious from the following phrase of this verse and the first phrase in verse thirteen.

*If any brother hath an unbelieving wife.* This probably refers to a situation in which the gospel had come to a family of unbelievers and the husband had obeyed the gospel but the wife had not. However, this may be taken as proof that marriage does not create an impossible relationship between a believer and an unbeliever. Certainly there are good and sufficient reasons why a believer should not marry an unbeliever, but if such is done this should serve as proof that the relationship is not unholy or intolerable in the sight of God. Paul teaches here that the unbelief of the wife is not sufficient reason for the believer to break up the home and subject himself and his wife to the danger of a promiscuous life or marrying another and becoming guilty of adultery. He binds the believer with the duty of maintaining the unity of the home. He gives no command to, makes no demand

of, the unbeliever, but says if the unbeliever is content to continue the union, the believer is to remain as the spouse of the unbeliever.

*The unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife.* This should mean that the unbelieving husband is made a Christian simply because he is wedded to a Christian wife. The word *sanctified* is to be taken in a limited sense, limited to the subject under consideration, that of marriage. By his connection with the believer he was sanctified, rendered fit ceremonially, for cohabitation with the believer. The Greek verb *is sanctified* is perfect tense and denotes that the results of a past action continues so that the husband continues to be fit to be the spouse of the believing wife of his unbelief.

*Else were your children unclean.* Paul does not mean to teach that children of unbelievers are unclean, unholy. Nor does he mean to teach that children of believers are holy in the sense that they are closer to God than children of unbelievers. He is basing this statement on a condition: If the believer leaves the unbeliever because he thinks the unbeliever not fit for a spouse, the believer must concede that the children born in that unholy union are unclean. But no parent can believe that his children are unclean, therefore you must concede that the parent is clean, sanctified, for the purpose of marriage. And if the parent is clean, fit in God's sight, for marriage, there is no reason for breaking the union with the unbeliever.

*Yet if the unbelieving departeth.* If the unbeliever refuses to live with the spouse who becomes a Christian, there is nothing the believer can do except to remain faithful to the Lord. The believer is not bound to the unbeliever so as to forfeit his eternal happiness to maintain the unity of the home.

*The brother or the sister is not under bondage.* That the word *bondage* here does not refer to the marriage bond is seen in that (a) the Greek word translated *bondage* is never used elsewhere to refer to the marriage bond; (b) the marriage bond is mentioned in verses 27, 39, and a different Greek word is used; and (c) if this refers to the marriage bond and so releases the believer that he can remarry, the Lord would

deal with two people in exactly the same situation in exactly different ways. In Matt. 19: 9, he says the divorced person cannot remarry, except for fornication, without committing adultery. If this verse gives the deserted believer the right to remarry, it does so in spite of the fact that the deserted person is in exactly the same situation as the divorced person who is not allowed to remarry. The Lord's teaching is not so inconsistent as that. The meaning is that the believer is not in such bondage to the unbeliever that he is obligated to leave the Lord in order to preserve his union with the unbeliever.

### III. Concerning Remarriage (1 Cor. 7: 39, 40)

*A wife is bound for so long time as her husband liveth.* Again, Paul makes no mention of the exception stated by Jesus. (Matt. 19: 9.) And since the exception is not mentioned in any of the letters to the churches, many have concluded that there is no just cause for divorce and remarriage. The exception which Jesus made was not binding before the cross; it cannot be binding after the gospel dispensation (Luke 20: 35); if it is not binding in this Christian dispensation, it never was and never will be binding on anybody at any time. We cannot conceive of our Lord making such a statement, hence we accept it as binding now. So this statement of Paul must be limited by that teaching of the Lord. Others have said that any statement of Jesus which is not repeated by an apostle in one of the letters to the churches is not binding today. This statement is so obviously unfounded that any one who thinks seriously will not accept it. The teaching of Jesus in Matt. 18: 15-20 is not repeated by an apostle in any of the epistles and yet all accept it as binding. Jesus said call no man father (Matt. 23: 9), and this is not found in any of the letters, but all accept it as binding on us now.

*If the husband be dead, she is free to be married.* As long as the husband lives she is bound to the husband in the sight of the Lord regardless of the fact that she has obtained a divorce. If she marries again during the lifetime of the husband, she shall be called an adul-

teress. (Rom. 7: 3.) And this is exactly what Jesus taught in Matt. 19: 9, only he added one exception to the rule. So if husband and wife separate for any cause other than fornication and either one of them marries again while the other is alive, the one who marries is guilty of adultery.

*Only in the Lord.* The widow is free to marry any one who is a Christian. There is no reason why the rule would not apply to a widower. Some have tried to weaken the force of this rule by saying the phrase in the Lord includes all who mentally assent to the truth that Jesus is the Son of God, all except heathen people and infidels. But since the expression has that meaning nowhere else in the Bible, and since it is obviously an unnatural meaning to give the words, we reject it and hold to the usual and obvious meaning given by practically all commentators ancient and modern.

*But she is happier if she abide as she is.* This, like his advice in verse eight, is to be taken in the light of circumstances and conditions which existed in Paul's day, the distress which was upon them. Verse

26.) Paul must have had in mind a widow of advanced age, for in another letter he says, "I desire therefore that the younger widows marry, bear children, rule the household, give no occasion to the adversary for reviling." (1 Tim. 5: 14.) The widow is not commanded to stay unmarried, but Paul gives his judgment in the matter concerning her happiness. On account of the conditions of the times she would be happier, less burdened in times of persecution, less anxious as to the welfare of others to whom she would be related by marriage.

*I think that I also have the Spirit of God.* Paul was in no doubt as to whether this statement was inspired. The word *also* indicates that he was saying something different from what others who claimed inspiration had said. So the church was left to choose between Paul, their father in the gospel, and some who had not done so much for them. They had seen too much evidence of the inspiration of Paul to reject his teaching and accept that of men who had given no such evidence of their inspiration as Paul had given.

### Lessons to Learn

1. Becoming happily adjusted to one another is a big problem for husband and wife. Good adjustment does not just happen; it is accomplished through cultivation. In the first division of our lesson Paul gives us a lot of good teaching on how to attain adjustment in the area of sex.

2. The law of Moses did not allow marriage with people who were not in the covenant lest the member of the covenant should be led into idolatry. The New Testament does not positively forbid a believer to marry an unbeliever, except possibly in case of widows, but the whole tenor of

teaching is against believers marrying unbelievers.

3. God made one woman for one man and their union is for the duration. Separation and divorce are no part of God's original plan; they are exceptions and are to be used as last resorts. Disregard for God's plan is rendering it most difficult, perhaps impossible, for many people to obey the gospel and live as God demands. Not many people are willing to break an adulterous union with wife or husband in order to comply with the law of the Lord. It is better to be safe than sorry.

### Questions for the Class

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

#### Golden Text Explained

State and discuss reasons why Christians should marry only Christians.  
What consideration should a man give the backgrounds when looking for a wife?  
Why is adaptation an important factor in choosing a wife?

State and discuss three reasons why a wife is said to be good for man.  
Name and discuss three ways a man is blessed of God through finding a good wife.

#### Introduction

Just how important to man's salvation is an understanding of this subject?  
Why should preachers and teachers be careful to teach only the truth on this subject?

State and discuss some tendencies you know to relax the law of the Lord concerning divorce and remarriage. What is man's place with reference to this law and the enforcement of it?

#### Relation of Husband and Wife

What specific reason did Paul have for writing the Corinthians about marriage? Can you prove that Paul opposed marriage or that he approved of marriage? Why did he say in this letter that it is good not to marry? Why did Paul advise marriage for some in spite of world conditions? How did Paul teach husband and wife to be solicitous of each other's welfare? What was the belief of ascetic Gnostics and of antinomian Gnostics? Does Paul's teaching in this lesson justify the celibacy of the clergy? What does our lesson teach about Satan?

#### Concerning Separation

To whose teaching on divorce does Paul refer and what did he teach? In case of separation, what does Paul demand? What may a husband and his wife learn from a period of separation?

Can you name grounds on which a "separation of bed and board" might be justified?

Is the relation between a believer and unbeliever such that God can never accept it?

What is meant by the unbeliever being sanctified by the believer?

What is said of the children of this mixed marriage?

What is meant by the word clean?

If the unbeliever departs, is the believer free to marry again? Why?

#### Concerning Remarriage

For how long is the wife bound to her husband?

Is there any exception to this rule?

Can you prove that the teaching of Jesus on this point is binding today?

What is the condition of all who divorce for trivial reasons and then remarry?

On what condition may a widow remarry? A widower?

What was Paul's judgment in the matter? What was Paul's advice to young widows?

Why did Paul say he thought he had the Spirit of God?

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

## Lesson V—January 29, 1956

### FELLOWSHIP IN THE GOSPEL

#### Lesson Text

1 Cor. 9: 7-19

7 What soldier ever serveth at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?

8 Do I speak these things after the manner of men? or saith not the law also the same?

9 For it is written in the law of Mo'ses, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn. Is it for the oxen that God careth,

10 Or saith he it assuredly for our sake? Yea, for our sake it was written: because he that ploweth ought to plow in hope, and he that thresheth, to *thresh* in hope of partaking.

11 If we sowed unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we shall reap your carnal things?

12 If others partake of *this* right over you, do not we yet more? Nevertheless we did not use this right; but we bear all things, that we may hindrance to the gospel of Christ.

13 Know ye not that they that minister about sacred things eat of

the things of the temple, *and* they that wait upon the altar have their portion with the altar?

14 Even so did the Lord ordain that they that proclaim the gospel should live of the gospel.

15 But I have used none of these things: and I write not these things that it may be so done in my case; for *it were* good for me rather to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.

16 For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; for woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel.

17 For if I do this of mine own will, I have a reward: but if not of mine own will, I have a stewardship intrusted to me.

18 What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel without charge, so as not to use to the full my right in the gospel.

19 For though I was free from all men, I brought myself under bondage to all, that I might gain the more.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"But let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things." (Gal. 6: 6.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Cor. 9: 20-27.

### Daily Bible Readings

January 23..	M..	Gospel to Be Preached (Matt. 28: 18-20; Mark 16: 15, 16)
January 24.	T.	Preached by Faithful men (2 Tim. 2: 1-4)
January 25.	W.	Husbandman Shares the Fruits (2 Tim. 2: 5-13)
January 26.	T.	Not to Muzzle the Ox (1 Tim. 5: 17, 18.)
January 27.	F.	Share in Prophet's Reward (Matt. 10: 40-42)
January 28.	S.	Example of the Churches of Macedonia (2 Cor. 8: 1-24)
January 29.	S.	Blessings of Liberality (2 Cor. 9: 1-15)

TIME.—A. D. 57.

PLACE.—Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints at Corinth.

### Golden Text Explained

1. Support for teachers. The word *communicate* in our text means to have fellowship with another. So those who are taught the word of God are to have fellowship with the teacher, to share their earthly goods with the teacher so he may continue to teach, (a) Such an arrangement is necessary. Not many men who are interested in teaching the word of God to others have enough wealth to enable them to continue very long without income from some source. Hence, if the taught do not communicate to the teacher, the teaching will be hindered, or stopped altogether so the teacher can make a living for himself and family, (b) The teacher deserves support. Paul reasons that if a man sows unto you spiritual things he deserves to reap of you carnal things. (1 Cor. 9: 11.) The tribe of Levi had no inheritance in Canaan. They ministered at the temple and were supported from the tithes of those whom they served. If they served the people spiritually, they deserved to reap of the people's carnal things. So the teacher today who teaches you to obey the gospel and to worship and serve God faithfully deserves to reap of your carnal things, (c) Such support is God's arrangement. As those who served in the temple were supported by those whom they served, "Even so did the Lord ordain that they that proclaim the gospel should live of the gospel." (1 Cor. 9: 14.) This is simply another way of saying that those who are taught the gospel are to communicate to, have fellowship with, gospel teachers.

2. Concerning the amount of support, (a) The support should be adequate. Nothing is said in the new covenant about the amount of support, how many dollars per month,

the teacher should receive. Nothing is said about whether the teacher should have any other source of income. So we must not make laws where God has made none. But if things are going to be done decently and orderly, a teacher who gives all his time to teaching must have adequate support or both he and the church will suffer. He will get behind with his bills and get a bad credit record which will reflect on the church, (b) This support should be specified and regular, if he gives all his time to teaching. It should be specified in order that the teacher may know how to plan his family budget. If some one objects that this makes it impossible for the teacher to walk by faith, we suggest that the clerk has a specified salary and that does not keep him from walking by faith. The support should be regular in order that the teacher may take care of his business in such manner as to build respect for himself and the church in the community, (c) Timely caution. Salaries can be out of proportion with the ability of the church. Salaries can be such as to invite unworthy men whose primary reason for preaching is to make money. Salaries can be such that they will encourage pride and enjoyment of worldly pleasures. Space forbids discussion of these things, but there is cause for concern about these things today.

3. Examples of fellowship, (a) The apostles in Jerusalem said they would give all their time to prayer and the ministry of the word. Acts 6: 4.) It is obvious that they lived out of the common fund contributed by such men as Barnabas. (Acts 4: 36, 37.) So we have an example of twelve men giving all their time

to the ministry of the word and living of the carnal things of those whom they taught, (b) The best example we have of a church supporting a teacher of the brethren at Philippi fellowshipping Paul in his work. He says they had fellowship with him from the first day. (Phil. 1: 5.) This refers to their support of him while he was in Philippi. Next, they

sent to him often in Thessalonica. (Phil. 4: 14-16.) And last, they sent to his necessities when he was in prison at Rome. (Phil. 4: 18.) This establishes the fact that a church, as opposed to an individual, may fellowshipping a gospel preacher. But our text authorizes the individual to do the same.

### Introduction

The subject of fellowship in the gospel is bigger than the financial support of gospel preachers and teachers so they may devote all their time to their work. Fellowship means partnership, and individuals may be partners in many types of gospel work. We must learn that the spiritual body, like the physical body, is composed of many parts and that it does its best work only when all parts are functioning in harmony with all other parts. Furthermore having fellowship with gospel preachers does not always mean giving of our money to support them. Many mission efforts to preach the gospel in country communities have failed because brethren stayed at home to enjoy a radio or television program while the preacher went alone to conduct the service. Many people are willing to give a reasonable amount of money so the congregation may carry on a respectable program of work, but they are not willing to give time and personal effort co-operating with the preacher and other members of the body to see that the work is done. This is a day of big organizations and the individual has been forgotten. This is a day of big cooperative drives and a matter which requires the personal attention and individual efforts of a dozen people is too small to get any consideration. We are losing sight

of the fact that, after all is said and done, God is still interested in the individual, and he still looks not on the outward appearance, but on the heart of that lone individual.

The early church continued in the fellowship of the apostles. (Acts 2: 42.) This means that they supported the apostles while they gave all their time to prayer and the ministry of the word. (Acts 6: 4.) But it means a lot more than that. They were deeply interested in the work of the apostles and were ready to assist them in any way possible. They would suffer with them, work with them, worship with them, share their earthly goods with them, rejoice with them in their successes and sorrow with them in their persecution. To put a part of our money into a project in which the preacher is interested while our heart is on business or pleasure is certainly far from the fellowship which the early Christians had with the apostles, and that fellowship which the Lord expects of us. We need to learn that each individual is to share the load, not only financially, but the load of teaching, visiting the sick and needy, encouraging the faint and weary, and in doing whatever needs to be done to make the church program a success in our community. We must find that which has been lost—the individual, and put him to work.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Duty Enforced by Parallels and the Law (1 Cor. 9: 7-10)

*What soldier ever serveth at his own charges?* That men are to receive wages as compensation for their services is the rule in all activities of life, and Paul uses this fact to prove that preachers and teachers are to be supported. As the soldier who serves his country is entitled to wages equal

to his needs, so Paul argues that the man who uses all his time to serve the kingdom of heaven is entitled to wages from the people whom he serves.

*Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not the fruit thereof?* The man who bestows labor upon the vineyard is entitled to eat fruit from it. So the man who bestows labor upon

people to bring them to Christ and to develop them spiritually is entitled to support from those whom he has taught. And the same principle is taught in the next statement that the man who feeds a flock is entitled to partake of the milk of the flock.

Do I speak these things after the manner of men? Must we depend upon human reasoning alone to prove that preachers of the gospel should be supported? Thus far Paul had used only human reasoning, but now he turns to something more weighty. But we may pause to say that if preachers of the gospel have no right to be supported, they are the only workers on earth who have no right to partake of the fruits of their labors. Wages for work done is the rule for all free people in all lands regardless of the degree of civilization. Furthermore, wages to some extent beyond the barest necessities of life are implied in all these illustrations used by Paul. Barest necessities of life in return for labor is the rule of slavery. No sensible man will work his slaves without giving them enough to keep them alive. While preachers of the gospel are slaves of the Lord, they should not be the slaves of the people whom they teach and so should be supported generously that they may live on the plane with those whom they serve.

*Thou shalt not muzzle the ox.* Turning from human reasoning to the law of Moses, Paul shows that the ox was not muzzled when he trod out the corn. Grain was threshed by oxen walking on it when put on the threshing floor. Moses did not allow the owner to put a muzzle on the ox so that he could not eat while he trampled the grain. (Deut. 25:4.)

*Is it for the oxen that God careth?* Paul reasons from the less to the greater. If God was so careful for the brute that he gave a law to assure the brute of that to which he was entitled in return for his labors, surely he will exercise as much care for those preachers of the gospel to see that they receive wages in return for the labor they render. Jesus used the same reasoning when he said God cares for the sparrow, and then asked if we are not worth more than sparrows. If God takes care

of the sparrow that is of little value, surely he will take care of us who are of greater value. (Luke 12: 6, 7.)

*He that ploweth ought to plow in hope.* Paul seems to pile one illustration upon another in proof that gospel preachers should be supported. Here he changes his picture from the threshing floor to the open field where the farmer is plowing and says that the man who plows has a right to hope to partake of the yield of the ground made possible by his labors. Some have argued from this that as the farmer does not know the amount of the harvest he will get as a result of his labors, so the preacher has no right to have an agreement with a church as to the amount of wages he will be paid in return for his labors. But since Paul used the soldier (verse 7) who received a stipulated wage in return for his services, we might conclude that Paul taught that the gospel preacher should have a stipulated salary. The truth is Paul did not have that in mind in either of the illustrations. The plowman who plows in hope but does not know what he will receive does not prove that the preacher should not know; the soldier who had a set salary for the service he rendered his country does not prove that the preacher should have a stipulated wage. Paul used these illustrations simply to prove that those who labor in the gospel should be supported so as to live on a plane with those whom they serve. The exact amount cannot be determined from these illustrations; whether there should, or should not, be an agreement between the preacher and those whom he serves cannot be determined; whether he shall be paid monthly or annually cannot be determined. These are matters which the Lord left to our sanctified common sense, and the man who makes a law regulating these matters which the Lord did not regulate and bring division in the church over these matters will have much for which to answer in the day of judgment. But there is one lesson we may be sure is taught, and that is both from human reasoning and from the law of Moses we have proof that wages in return for labor is a universal rule, and those who labor in the gospel have as much right to receive support as

those who labor in any other field of activity.

## II. Duty Enforced by the Relation of the Spiritual and the Carnal (1

Cor. 9: 11-14)

*If we sowed unto you spiritual things.* To sow spiritual things is another way of saying he had ministered to their spiritual needs by preaching to them and by teaching them how to live the Christian life. To do this he had denied himself the joys and comforts of home, the income from a regular job or a business of his own, and subjected himself to sufferings almost beyond his ability to bear. (2 Cor. 11: 23ff.)

*Is it a great matter if we shall reap your carnal things?* Should you consider it unreasonable in us to expect to share with you in your material wealth? Since spiritual values cannot be bartered across the counter for food and clothing, and since spiritual servants have need of these carnal things, God has always made it the duty of those who receive the spiritual services to support those who render the services. Abraham gave Melchizedek, the priest, the "tenth of all." (Gen. 14: 20.) When Saul went to Samuel for help, he felt that he must take a present in his hand in return for the service he expected to receive. (1 Sam. 9: 7ff.) And the tribe of Levi received their entire support in return for the services they rendered at the temple. Again, Paul felt that the service rendered by the teacher was worth more than the financial help he received. When Onesimus, the slave, ran away from Philemon, Paul sent him back and told Philemon he would pay anything Onesimus owed him for any wrong he had inflicted. Then Paul said for Philemon to charge it to his (Paul's) account and suggested that Philemon owed him his own life. (Phile. 19.) Paul had rendered a spiritual service to Philemon which was worth more than he would ever be able to repay in money, so Paul said if Onesimus owes you anything, you may charge it to my account, which you will never be able to repay. Again, Paul viewed the spiritual service rendered by the Jews in giving Christ and the gospel to the Gentiles so great a blessing that the Gentiles were obligated to share their material wealth with the Jews when they

were in need. "And their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they owe it to them also to minister unto them in carnal things." (Rom. 15: 27.) So there is a relationship between the spiritual and the carnal which God has recognized in every dispensation which obligates the one served in a spiritual way to share his carnal things with the spiritual servant.

*If others partake of this right over you.* Paul had learned from some source that the church at Corinth had supported some preachers after he had left them. So he uses this fact to show them that they recognized the truth that they should share their carnal things with spiritual servants. If they had paid others, they should admit that it was right to pay him. But in the next verse he hastens to say that he did not ask pay from them and gives his reason for it. But we will study this in our next division.

*Know ye not that they that minister about sacred things.* Again we have the impression that Paul is piling up evidence on this point. Rarely, if ever, does Paul give as much space, or advance so many different arguments, to prove any point of the duty of the church as he does on this and the general subject of giving. Is it because more teaching is needed on money matters to get churches to do their duty?

*Eat of the things of the temple.* Barnes suggests that this may refer to the Levites who were supported by tithes which were brought to the temple. It was their duty to help the priests, yet they had no part in the offering of sacrifices, other than to help prepare the animals for the offering.

*Have their portion with the altar.* In this part of his statement Paul refers to the priests who made the offerings. A part of many of the offerings fell to the lot of the priests while a part of it was burned on the altar. For the general law regarding the part which went to the priest see Num. 18: 8-20. And for the details of the law of these offerings read the first few chapters of Leviticus. But Paul's argument is that if those who served in spiritual matters partook of the carnal rewards under the law, those in the gospel dispensation who

serve in spiritual matters are to partake of carnal rewards.

*Even so did the Lord ordain.* The word Lord here refers to Jesus Christ. When Jesus sent out his disciples to preach, he told them not to take a purse, for the laborer is worthy of his hire. (Matt. 10: 10; Luke 10: 7.) And Paul refers to these statements as the teaching of scripture. (1 Tim. 5: 18.) The Greek word for *ordain* in this verse is the same word Paul used when he said he *gave order* to the churches to lay by in store on the first day of the week. (1 Cor. 16: 1.) So the support of preachers is as binding on churches as is the contribution on the first day of the week.

*They that proclaim the gospel should live of the gospel.* This is the point toward which Paul has been working through all the illustrations in our lesson. This is his conclusion based on the principle that wages are due the laborer in all walks of life; that the law of Moses, as well as God's law in all dispensations, recognized the right of the laborer in spiritual matters to share the material wealth of the people served; and that Jesus Christ ordained that it should be so in his kingdom. The amount of support, or whether the amount should be specified, or whether the servant is to be paid weekly, monthly or annually are matters on which neither the Lord nor Paul legislated. We should therefore leave these matters to the servants and the churches to settle among themselves.

### III. Paul Glories in a Personal Privilege (1 Cor. 9: 15-19)

*But I have used none of these things.* When we remember that Paul was answering questions written by the church at Corinth, we will naturally ask: What question was he answering when he wrote about support of preachers? Brother McGarvey says his teaching on this subject was called forth, first by the fact that Paul had accepted no wages from the church; second, by the fact that other teachers were coming along demanding wages. When the church cited Paul as an example of preaching without pay, these teachers accused Paul of knowing that he was really not an apostle and was therefore ashamed to accept pay. So the church wrote a question similar to this: "Explain why, being an

apostle, you did not take wages due you as such."

*I write not these things that it may be so done.* He hastens to explain that, though he has taught them the truth that churches ought to support gospel preachers, he does not write this for the purpose of getting pay for work done in the past.

*It were good for me rather to die.* Paul says he preferred to die rather than lose the right to glory, rejoice, in the fact that he could give the gospel to others without charge. That was his personal privilege. The Lord bound churches to support preachers, but he did not bind preachers to accept support. Paul feared that his acceptance of pay might prove a hindrance to the gospel. (1 Cor. 9: 12b.) This fear and the joy of serving others without charge were his reasons for not demanding pay of the church at Corinth.

*If I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of.* Paul has spoken of his right to glory, and has said that he will not allow any church to take away from him the ground of this glorying. In these next few verses he explains negatively and positively his ground of glorying. He cannot glory in the fact that he is preaching the gospel, for the Lord appeared to him, qualified him as a witness, and commanded him to preach; he cannot do otherwise without rebelling against the Lord. Necessity was laid upon him to preach; he had no choice in the matter, except to rebel. Woe unto him if he did not preach the gospel. When we do that which we must do or be condemned, we cannot glory in the fact that we are doing it.

*If I do this of mine own will, I have a reward.* Paul could do none other than preach the gospel; he felt he was due no reward for preaching. But if he preached it without charge, he felt that he had a right to expect a reward. If he preached the gospel and accepted pay for it, which he admitted he had a right to do, he felt that he was doing only that which the fear of hell would cause anybody to do; he was merely accepting a stewardship and doing what was demanded of the steward. Few people of today have Paul's attitude in such matters. Many are willing to go along doing just what they think they have to do to keep out of hell;

they do not aim to do one thing more than they positively must do in order to get to heaven. If they can get to heaven without going to church Sunday and Wednesday nights, they will certainly not go; but if they are convinced that they have to attend church on these nights in order to keep out of hell, they will put out the effort to go. Paul could preach the gospel and accept pay for it and still keep out of hell, but he wished to do more than he had to do to escape eternal punishment. So he did that which he did not have to do—he preached the gospel without charge to the people.

*So as not to use to the full my right.* He had the right to charge a reasonable amount for his services, but he did not wish to *use to the full* his rights. . The sufferings he endured on account of this sacrifice accrued to his account in the bank of heaven in the form of treasures in heaven.

*Though I was free from all men.* In another place Paul says he was a debtor to all men. (Rom. 1: 14.) He was a debtor to all to preach the gos-

pel to them, but he was not a debtor to preach it to them without charge. He was bound to preach the gospel to them because the Lord laid that obligation upon him, but the Lord did not lay upon him the duty of preaching without remuneration for his labors.

*I brought myself under bondage to all.* Realizing his freedom, Paul willingly made himself the slave of all. As slaves work without pay, so did Paul; as slaves cater to the whims and fancies of those whom they serve, so Paul became all things to all men that he might by all means save some. This is a brand of humility and self-abasement of which we know very little. It is excelled only by Paul's Master, who humbled himself to partake of our nature, suffer the shame and disgrace of the cross that we might be saved.

*That I might gain the more.* Paul's interest was not in his salary, but in gaining as many souls for the Lord as possible. A wealth of warning is here for preachers today.

### Lessons to Learn

1. The church, as the pillar and ground of the truth, is obligated to support preachers of the gospel. When they cease to do this in order to erect fine buildings, they are misplacing the emphasis and failing in their mission in the world.

2. There should be more equality of support. Sometimes a dozen of the most influential preachers are paid more than two or three dozen of equally capable and godly men. Again, preachers for big congregations are paid almost double the

amount paid to men in mission fields. A church that pays its local preacher \$150 per week and furnishes him a house in which to live will pay its missionary in Wisconsin or Maine \$80 or \$100 per week and let him pay his own rent.

3. All of us need more of Paul's love for lost souls. If every individual in the church could cultivate that interest in saving the lost, the church would immediately be on fire with zeal and activity. We need to remember individual responsibility.

### Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give the time, place, and persons.

#### Golden Text Explained

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

Can you show the necessity of this arrangement?

On what grounds did Paul argue that teachers deserve support?

Can you show that such is God's arrangement?

What does our lesson teach about the amount of support a teacher shall receive?

What evidence do we have that the Jerusalem church supported its preachers?

Can you show how the church at Philippi had fellowship with Paul?

#### Introduction

What is the meaning of fellowship?

Does it include more than giving of money?

Name and discuss several ways in which churches may fellowship preachers.

Discuss the danger of losing the individual in our craze for big organization.

#### Duty Enforced by Parallels and the Law

How does Paul use the soldier to prove that preachers should be supported?

How does Paul teach this lesson by use of the vineyard?

Contrast the rule of wages for labor with the rule of slavery.

How did Paul use the ox to teach support for preachers?  
 What use does he make of the plowman to teach churches to support preachers?  
 Can you show that these verses teach, or do not teach, anything about a stipulated salary for the preacher?  
 Who has the right to determine how much support the gospel preacher shall receive?

Duty Enforced by the Relation of the Spiritual and the Carnal  
 What is meant by sowing spiritual things?  
 What is meant by reaping carnal things?  
 Can you give examples of carnal things being given in return for spiritual services?  
 Why was Philemon in debt to Paul?  
 Why were Gentiles in debt to the Jews?  
 How did they seek to pay that debt?  
 How did Paul know that the church at Corinth realized their duty of paying preachers?

Discuss Old Testament examples Paul used to prove that preachers should be supported.  
 What is the meaning of the word ordain in our text?  
 Who ordained that preachers should live of the gospel?

Paul Glories in a Personal Privilege  
 Can you show that Paul was not expecting to receive back wages from Corinth?  
 What would Paul prefer to accepting wages for his preaching?  
 Did Paul glory in the fact that he preached the gospel? Why?  
 In precisely what did Paul glory?  
 Can you illustrate how some people do only what they must do to keep out of hell?  
 In what respect was Paul free from all men?  
 How was he a slave to all men? Why?  
 What is there of interest to you in "lessons to learn"?

## Lesson VI—February 5, 1956

### A LESSON IN EXPEDIENCY

#### Lesson Text

1 Cor. 10: 21-33

21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons: ye cannot partake of the table of the Lord, and of the table of demons.

22 Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?

23 All things are lawful; but not all things are expedient. All things are lawful; but not all things edify.

24 Let no man seek his own, but each his neighbor's *good*.

25 Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, eat, asking no question for conscience' sake;

26 For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.

27 If one of them that believe not biddeth you *to a feast*, and ye are disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience' sake.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say."* (1 Cor. 10: 15.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Cor. 10: 1-20.

#### Daily Bible Readings

- January 30. M. . . . . Expedient That One should Die (John 11: 47-53)
- January 31. T. . . . . Expedient That Jesus Should Go Away (John 16: 7-14)
- February 1. W. . . . . Some Things Not Expedient (1 Cor. 6: 12-20)
- February 2. Th. . . . . Expediency in Giving (2 Cor. 8: 10-15)
- February 3. F. . . . . Not Expedient for Paul to Glory (2 Cor. 12: 1-5)

February 4. S. . . . . Should Seek the Good of All (1 Cor. 12: 12-27)

February 5. S. . . . . Living for Others (1 Cor. 9: 19-23)

TIME.—A. D. 57.

PLACE.—Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints of Corinth.

### Golden Text Explained

1. Christianity appeals to our intellect. Paul did not write to the church at Corinth as if he were writing to people who had no knowledge, nor did he write as if he wished to discourage investigation as to the truth of what he wrote. He was willing for them to compare his teaching with the knowledge they had acquired from study and experience, and he was not afraid of the conclusion they would reach so long as they exercised faith in God. But for further proof that Christianity appeals to the intellect we may notice

(a) Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8: 32.) Jesus taught and qualified men to go into all the world to teach all nations and made the blessings of time and eternity dependent upon a knowledge of the truth these men taught. (b) Again, he said, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me." (John 6: 45.) Here we see that a knowledge of the Father is essential that we may come to Jesus to obtain the blessings he obtained for us in his coming to earth, in his death and resurrection, and in his intercessory reign in heaven. (c) And Christianity differs from Judaism in that no one can be a member of the new covenant without a knowledge of God. Speaking of the differences between the two covenants, the writer of Hebrews says, "And they shall not teach every man his fellow-citizen, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest of them." (Heb. 8: 11.) People were born by physical birth into the covenant under Judaism, so had to be taught to know God after entrance into the covenant. But under Christianity we enter the covenant by a spiritual birth which includes a knowledge of God, so that no person in the covenant has to be taught to know God.

2. Christianity tries the faith. When Paul told the Corinthians to judge

what he said, we need not get the idea that every requirement of the gospel will be in line with and appeal to human reason or human standards. God's ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts; his ways and thoughts are higher than man's, as much so as the heavens are higher than the earth. (Isa. 55: 8, 9.) But God tries our faith (a) in that he demands that we turn from the ways of man. In the context of our text we find Paul telling people to give up idolatry and all association therewith. Evidently some members of the church wished to continue association with friends still in idolatry and were going with these idolatrous friends to feasts dedicated to their idols. They had argued that an idol was nothing and that meat sacrificed to an idol was not made unfit to eat, so there was no harm in attending and partaking of the feast. Though there was truth in their contention, Paul insisted that they could not drink the cup of the Lord and of demons and be acceptable to the Lord, so they would have to discontinue their practice. This was a trial of their faith and submission to the Lord, (b) Christianity also tries our faith by use of the weak and foolish things and ways of accomplishing its purposes. (1 Cor. 1: 26ff.) God used the marching and shouting of the people to bring down the wall of Jericho: he used the water of Jordan to cleanse the leprosy of Naaman: and he used the despised cross on which his Son died a shameful death to reconcile the world to himself. Though these things appeal to our intellect, they also try our faith in the wisdom and power of God.

3. Individual responsibility. (a) Each one has the responsibility of learning what God's will is in order that he may be saved, (b) Each one has the responsibility of judging these matters and choosing whether he will or will not accept them as from God. (c) Each one must make the decision to practice, to obey, the things he has learned.

## Introduction

When studying a lesson on expediency, there are some things we must understand. First, we must know the meaning of the word. The English word is defined as that which is "conducive to special advantage rather than to what is universally right." Keep in mind this is the meaning of the English word as it is used today. But can we think of the Bible endorsing anything not universally right, even if it works to our special advantage? However, the first definition Webster gives is better: "Apt and suitable to the end in view." We can use this definition very well in our lesson.

The Greek word means "to carry with others; to collect or contribute in order to help, hence to help, be profitable be expedient." (Thayer.) In the New Testament it is translated by the word profitable exactly the same number of times it is by expedient.

If a thing is *profitable*, or apt and suitable to the end in view, we conclude that, when Paul said all things are not expedient, he had some end in view. That end of object is the salvation of souls and the edification of the church. All things may be lawful, but not all things are expedient—thus, not all things will contribute to the salvation of the lost and the edification of the church.

Next, we need to understand that Paul used the term *all things* in a limited sense. Certainly Paul did not mean to teach that absolutely all things are lawful. That would mean that murder, theft, lying, adultery, and everything else is lawful. So we must limit *all things* to such as have no moral significance, things neither moral nor immoral. Again, we must limit this expression to things not included in matters of faith, things God has commanded. Is it lawful for one to refuse to be baptized? or to refuse to take the Lord's supper? There is nothing moral or immoral about these things, yet because they are matters of faith we are bound to obey.

Again, we must learn that the range of the lawful is greater than the range of the expedient. More things are lawful for me to do than are expedient to do. I cannot do anything unlawful, but I may, often should, refrain from doing things lawful because they are not expedient. If you draw a large circle and name it "things lawful," then draw a small circle inside the big circle and name it "things expedient," you will have the relation and relative range of things lawful and things expedient. But keep in mind that these things lawful are not the things demanded in the law of faith.

## Exposition of the Text

### I. Separation from Idolatry (1 Cor. 10: 21, 22)

*Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons.* Paul's object in this part of his letter was to separate the new converts from all associations and connections which might lead them back into idolatry. In the first part of the chapter (verses 1-14), he had pointed out the mistake of the children of Israel in the wilderness as a warning against such dangers as beset the Corinthians. Many of them recently had come out of the idolatry of heathen religions; they were still in the same community and surrounded by the same kindred and friends they knew while they lived in idolatry: they were being invited continually by these kindred and friends to attend the idolatrous feasts. Some of them

reasoned like this: the idol is nothing but a piece of dead wood; food offered to such a piece of wood is not contaminated; and with this superior knowledge we can be sociable with our friends and still not be injured in any way. (1 Cor. 8: 4-13.) But Paul reminded those who reasoned after this manner that "the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have communion with demons." The heathen generally did not have the same conception as the Jews had about the devil and his angels. Among the Greeks the spirits of ancestors were demons elevated to various ranks. Some of these were good and others were evil. They offered sacrifices to propitiate the evil so as to avoid suffering their displeasure. To take

part in such exercises through the week and then take the cup of the Lord on the Lord's day was not right. Even though the exercise would not hurt the Christian, it would give the heathen the idea that his religion was as good and right as Christianity and would make it impossible for the Christian to teach the heathen the truth.

*Ye cannot partake of the table of the Lord.* This is a repetition of the idea in the preceding phrase, but it goes further to show that the heathen religions had tables from which were served food which was supposed to be shared by the people with the demons in whose honor the feast was held. Paul says that those who offered part and ate part of the sacrifices under the law of Moses had communion with the altar. And to have communion with the altar was to have communion with God on whose altar the sacrifice was offered. So when they burned part of an animal on the altar and ate another part, they were having communion with God. Likewise when the heathen offered part of an animal on an altar and ate a part, he was communing with the demon. And regardless of the Christian's superior knowledge, the heathen could never think of him as doing any less if he took part in the feast. True, the idol was nothing; but there was a reality back of that idol, and to drink wine and eat food dedicated to him was to have communion with him.

*Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?* God is represented as being a jealous God (Ex. 20: 5; 34: 14), and moved to jealousy by strange gods (Deut. 32: 21; Psalm 78: 58). So Paul said these Corinthian Christians would provoke God to jealousy if they continued to eat and drink at the tables of these demons in these heathen feasts. In this way he hoped to separate them entirely from heathen practices and influences.

*Are we stronger than he?* One who pays no attention to the fact that God is a jealous God, and that he is moved to jealousy by our eating and drinking in heathen temples at the altars of demons, must either think he is stronger than God and can protect himself from wrath of God, or must have no concern for what may come upon him. Since no one is stronger than God; since God has said idola-

ters will be punished in the lake of fire (Rev. 21: 8); and since God always keeps his word, whether a promise or a threat, the only wise thing for these Corinthians to do was to stay away from the tables of the demons.

## II. Questions About Matters of Expediency (1 Cor. 10: 23-30)

*All things are lawful; but not all things are expedient.* We have seen already that *all things* must be limited to such things as are not in the moral realm or matters of faith. Paul means all such things as eating of meats. A thing may be both lawful and expedient; it may be lawful and not expedient; but a thing cannot be both expedient and unlawful. When a thing is classed as unlawful for us, we have no business even considering whether it is expedient or inexpedient. Lying is unlawful, so there can be no such thing as an expedient lie.

*But not all things edify.* Some things which are lawful, which may be done within the strict letter of the law, are of such nature that they do not edify. The connection forces us to make *others* the object of the verb edify. There are some things which are lawful for us to do, but if they wound the weak brother's conscience (1 Cor. 8: 12), they do not edify. Our rule of conduct should not be to do anything which is lawful for us to do, but to do that which will edify another. "So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another." (Rom. 14: 19.)

*Let no man seek his own, but each his neighbor's good.* This is the key to this whole lesson on expediency. We defined expediency as that which is apt and suitable to the end in view, and we suggested that the salvation of the lost and the edification of the saved is the end in view, the thing we wish to accomplish. Paul states the end here as our neighbor's good, which is the same as his salvation. So Paul is saying that we must not be so much concerned about what is lawful to us, but what is for our neighbor's good. The selfish, self-centered man's only concern is whether a thing is lawful for him; all he wishes to know is whether or not the doing of a thing will damn his soul; he is not concerned about

what effect his action will have on the other fellow. Paul says we are to be lowly in mind, counting others better than ourselves; "not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others." (Phil. 2: 3, 4.)

*Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, eat.* Since meat sacrificed to idols was sold by heathen priests (the part which fell to them for their services), it would be next to impossible for people to buy meat in public markets and know positively whether it had, or had not, been used in sacrifice. And whether they asked that question of Paul or not, he knew the conditions in the markets of Corinth and told them what to do.

*Asking no question for conscience's sake.* Here Paul agreed with some who claimed superior knowledge in these affairs and knew that offering meat to idols, or to demons, did not contaminate the meat, did not render it unfit to eat. (1 Cor. 8: 4, 7, 8.) So they might buy meat anywhere it was for sale without asking questions. The matter of influence was not involved in this action. There was no way the buying of meat in a public market could be taken by a worshiper of heathen gods to mean the purchaser was giving honor to a demon. But when the Christian went into the idol's temple and ate meat which all knew had been offered to the demon, there was no possible way for the heathen worshiper to understand that the Christian was not giving honor to the demon. Conscience in this verse is that of the purchaser and not of one who may see him buy the meat.

*The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof.* This is given as a reason why one may eat any meat offered for sale in the market. Being a part of the fulness of the earth, it belongs to the Lord, is given by him for food if it be received with thanksgiving (1 Tim. 4: 4, 5), and may be eaten anywhere except under such conditions as will give honor to a demon, or be a just cause for a heathen worshiper to think you are honoring the demon.

*Whatsoever is set before you, eat.* If an unbeliever should invite you to a feast, or to dine in his home, and you are disposed to accept that invitation, you may do so and eat anything he puts on the table. Here

again we see that social intercourse with unbelievers was not forbidden. On the other hand these social contacts were to be used for the purpose of teaching people and leading them to the Lord. And, again, Paul says the Christian is not to ask questions for the sake of his own conscience. The question of right and wrong is not involved in eating meat in a private home, so the Christian may eat with a clear conscience. Here we see that the place where and the circumstances under which a man does something may make a big difference. A man may eat meat in a private home and do no wrong, but he may not eat meat from the same animal in a heathen temple.

*But if any man say unto you, This hath been offered in sacrifice.* Paul supposes a man invites you into his home, sets meat on the table before you, and says it had been offered in sacrifice, you are not to eat. The fact that the man tells you that the meat had been offered in sacrifice means that he will eat in honor of the demon to whom it was sacrificed and intends for you to do the same. Here it is not the *place* where the meat is eaten, but the *circumstances* under which it is eaten, that makes it wrong.

*Conscience, I say, not thine own, but the other's.* Paul has used the word *conscience* twice in the context when he meant the conscience of the Christian, but now he is careful to make it clear that he is speaking of the conscience of the unbeliever, or perhaps a weak Christian who may still eat meat in honor of the spirits of his ancestors. For the sake of the other man's conscience Paul would refuse to eat meat under these circumstances lest his example embolden the weak Christian to "eat with offense" (1 Cor. 8: 7-13), or cause a heathen idolater to be more confirmed in his heathen worship.

*For why is my liberty judged by another conscience?* This verse is difficult for it seems to suggest that our liberty is not to be determined by the conscience of another, and yet that is the very thing Paul has been saying. Macknight supposes that Paul proposes this question as the position of a liberal who does not wish to sacrifice his liberty for the sake of the conscience of another man. And his answer to the liberal

would be, "For the very reason, that by the free gift of God all his good creatures are bestowed on thee, thou art bound, in eating and drinking, as in all thy actions, to consult the glory of God, who has commanded thee, even in different actions, to consider what may be good for the edification of others." But Barnes and others explain it as follows: though I have the liberty to eat and know that the meat is not contaminated and that I will not be condemned of God for eating it, "the weak and scrupulous believer will censure, judge, condemn me as regardless of what is proper, and as disposed to fall in with the customs of idolaters; and will suppose that I cannot have a good conscience. Under these circumstances, why should I act so as to expose myself to this censure and condemnation?" Why should I exercise my liberty in eating when to do so will expose me to such harsh and unjust condemnation based upon the conscience of another man?

*Why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?* Why subject myself to misunderstanding and calumny over a thing of no more importance than food? The phrase *that for which I give thanks* simply means his food, and yet it implies that he always gave thanks for his food before eating. (1 Tim. 4: 3-5.) This is a practice too much neglected among members of the church. Any one who can say "Thank you" to his friends for a birthday present, can give thanks to God for his daily bread.

### III. Glorifying God and Pleasing Men

(1 Cor. 10: 31-33)

*Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* The eating and drinking of this verse in its primary meaning is limited to such as is under consideration. To eat and drink in a heathen temple could not be done to the glory of God. Though one might have sufficient knowledge of all matters involved to eat and drink there without personal injury, yet the view which others would take of such action would make it impossible for one to glorify God in the act. But of course the principle may be given a wider application in that we are not to do anything, even things as common as eating and drinking, which will reflect dishonor upon our

God. We should be careful to weigh every act in business, at home, or in society by this rule—Will God's name be honored or dishonored? If there is a reasonable possibility that God's name will be dishonored, we must refrain from that act.

*Give no occasion of stumbling.* Paul is still dealing with the question of the conduct of the believer as it affects the unbeliever, or the weak believer. In matters of faith, we must obey God regardless of the effect it may have upon me; but in matters of indifference such as eating and drinking, we must forego our liberties for the sake of the other man's conscience lest he be caused to stumble and miss heaven. And Paul says this rule applies in the case of Jews or Greeks, or members of the church of God. We are not to allow the matter of race or relationship to determine our application and practice of this rule. This is just another indication that Christianity is not for any one race, or that it favors any race as superior to or entitled to greater privileges than any other.

*As I also please all men in all things.* Again we must take the word *all* in a limited sense. Paul did not please all men, else he would not have been persecuted. But it was his desire to do so, and he strove earnestly to do so. The expression *all things* also must be limited to such things as are under consideration. He would not violate his conscience in matters of faith just to please man, for to do so would be to lose the friendship of God. (Gal. 1: 10; James 4: 4.) But in matters of indifference where no principle of right and wrong was involved, he was willing to deny himself of his liberties in order that he might conform to that which others thought would be becoming in him as a Christian. Notice also that Paul offers himself again as an example for others to follow. This is not pride in him, but a consciousness of the fact that he had so lived before the people to whom he wrote that they, his children in the gospel, would do well to imitate him.

*Not seeking mine own profit.* Paul thought it better for one to suffer the inconvenience or loss of liberty to do as he pleased in matters of indifference than for one to be caused to stumble because of his con-

science and be lost. This is the unselfishness that should characterize every child of God. If Jesus was willing to give up his place in heaven, come to this world of sin and shame, suffer and die on the cross that many

might be saved, surely we should not think it too great a price to pay for the salvation of people to give up our liberties in matters of indifference to keep them from being lost.

### Lessons to Learn

1. May not our course of carelessness and negligence at times be construed as provoking the Lord to jealousy? Do we not act as if we think we are stronger than God and able to avert the punishment he has threatened against such manner of life as we live? If we really believe that God will punish the sinner and that we are too weak to avert such punishment, why do we go along with such little concern?

2. Though we are free to associate with people of the world, we are not

free to ignore their demands as to how we live. Exercising our liberties among them might be the means of forever closing the door to the gospel in their hearts. Though free in some respects, the Christlike man becomes a slave in others.

3. The glory of God must be our first aim; the good of our neighbor must be our second aim; our own happiness and welfare come last. This order is not easy until we have so cultivated it that it seems to come naturally.

### Questions for the Class

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

#### Golden Text Explained

State and discuss three reasons why we know Christianity appeals to man's intellect.

How much does God's ways and thoughts differ from those of man?

How did God try people's faith in connection with idolatry?

Illustrate how God tries men's faith by use of weak and foolish things.

State and discuss three responsibilities man has in these matters.

#### Introduction

What does the word expediency mean?  
What is the end or object Paul had in view while teaching this lesson of expediency?

What limitation must we put on all things as used by Paul in this lesson? Which has the greater range, "things lawful" or "things expedient"? Explain why.

What is the meaning of the word lawful as used in this connection?

#### Separation from Idolatry

What was Paul's primary object in writing this part of his letter?

How did he warn the church at Corinth against the dangers of idolatry?

What reasoning on the part of liberal believers did Paul have to meet?

Contrast the Greek view of demons with that of the Jews.

What evidence do we have that heathen religions had feasts in connection with worship?

How did the Jews have communion with the altar and what is meant by this?

How did this argument affect the Christian's practice of partaking in heathen feasts

How may one provoke the Lord to jealousy and how serious is this course?

What lesson is suggested in the question, Are we stronger than God?

#### Questions About Matters of Expediency

Can a thing be both expedient and unlawful? Why?

What should be our rule of conduct in these matters?

Contrast the selfish self-centered man with the Christlike man in these matters?

What is the meaning of shambles?

Could meat be bought there freely?

Why was conscience not involved when eating meat bought in the shambles?

What reason did Paul give for their right to eat meat bought in the open market?

Could a believer attend a feast in an unbeliever's home and eat meat?

Explain why the believer could eat meat in a heathen home, but not in a heathen temple.

Under what condition was the believer forbidden to eat meat in an unbeliever's home?

Explain the statement, Why is my liberty judged by another conscience.

What evidence do we have that Paul gave thanks for food before eating?

Is that practice neglected in many Christian homes today?

#### Glorifying God and Pleasing Men

How many of the activities of life must be done to the glory of God?

What is our action in matters of faith?

What is our rule of action in matters of expediency?

What limitation must be placed on Paul's pleasing all men in all things?

What was Jesus willing to give up to save people?

What liberties are we willing to sacrifice to save the lost?

What is there in lessons to learn?

Lesson VII—February 12, 1956

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Lesson Text

1 Cor. 12: 1, 4-11, 28, 29; 13: 8-10, 13

1 Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren. I would not have you ignorant.

11 But all these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as he will.

4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, *divers* kinds of tongues.

5 And there are diversities of ministrations, and the same Lord.

6 And there are diversities of workings, but the same God, who worketh all things in all.

29 Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all *workers* of miracles?

7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal.

8 Love never faileth: but whether *there be* prophecies, they shall be done away; whether *there be* tongues, they shall cease; whether *there be* knowledge, it shall be done away.

8 For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom; and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit:

9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part;

9 To another faith, in the same Spirit; and to another gifts of healings, in the one Spirit;

10 But when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.

10 And to another workings of miracles; and to another prophecy; and to another discernings of spirits; to another *divers* kinds of tongues; and to another the interpretation of tongues:

13 But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three: and the greatest of these is love.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." (1 Cor. 13: 2.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Cor. 13: 1-7.

Daily Bible Readings

- February 6. M. . . . . John Teaches Concerning the Spirit (Matt. 3: 1-12)
- February 7. T. . . . . Baptism of the Spirit (Acts 1: 1-8)
- February 8. W. . . . . Apostles Baptized in the Spirit (Acts 2: 1-4)
- February 9. T. . . . . Gift of the Spirit (Acts 2: 38; 10: 44-48)
- February 10. F. . . . . Spirit Without Measure to Christ (John 3: 31-35)
- February 11. S. . . . . Samaritans Receive the Spirit (Acts 8: 14-17)
- February 12. S. . . . . Termination of Spiritual Gifts (Eph. 4: 1-16)

TIME.—A. D. 57.

PLACE.—Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints at Corinth.

Golden Text Explained

1. Spiritual gifts evaluated. (a) Prophecy. We have used this word so much to refer to foretelling of events that many think this is all it means. The primary meaning of the verb form is "to speak for another." A prophet is one who speaks for another whether he foretells some event

or teaches one his duty. Paul says a prophet speaks edification, exhortation, consolation. (1 Cor. 14: 3.) Aaron was the prophet of Moses because he spoke in the place of Moses. (Ex. 7: 1.) The gift of prophecy was necessary in the early church because the new covenant was not written

and each congregation needed mouth-pieces through which God could teach and exhort the people, (b) Mysteries. A mystery is not something incomprehensible, but something which cannot be known except through revelation. Paul says the equality of Jews and Gentiles in the church was a mystery which was not made known in ages past as it is now revealed through the apostles. (Eph. 3: 3-8.) That we can be saved from sin by the death of Christ is a truth we could never have known but by revelation. Hence a knowledge of all mysteries is something devoutly to be desired. Knowledge is grouped with mysteries in our text and refers to the "ability to fully understand the revelations in all their bearings upon the present and future life, former revelations, dispensations, etc." (McGarvey.) (c) Faith. This is not the "common faith" which comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10: 17; Tit. 1: 4), but a miraculous faith enabling one to work miracles. All these gifts were necessary in the infant church, but not to be valued as highly as love.

2. Gifts versus graces, (a) Terms defined. Spiritual gifts were enabling powers granted a person for the purpose of doing something. Christian graces, of which love is the greatest, are qualities or characteristics of the person. Gifts are no part of the character; graces make a person what he is. Gifts we possess in order to *do* something; graces we cultivate in order to *be* something. (b) Examples of gifts without graces. We may possess remarkable gifts without ever cultivating proper graces. Balaam had the gift of prophecy, yet he lacked the graces of sincerity and generosity; he was covetous and loved the hire of wrongdoing. (2 Pet. 2: 15.) Judas had the power to work such miracles as all apostles worked before the establishment of the church, yet he was lacking in the

graces of sincerity and love for the Lord; he was a hypocrite and betrayer. Jesus says some will argue in the judgment that they prophesied and did many mighty works in the name of Christ, but because of their failure to cultivate Christian graces they will be lost. (Matt. 7: 22, 23.)

(c) Reasons for superiority of graces. (1) Gifts and their exercise tend to call attention to the person and what he does. It is difficult to exercise gifts without exalting oneself in the eyes of people. Graces are less showy. People will be more apt to see Christ in us because of the cultivation of graces than because of the exercise of our gifts. (2) Possession of gifts is no guarantee of character, but the cultivation of graces is itself character. Balaam, Judas, and Caiaphas are examples of men who possessed and exercised gifts, but who were devoid of godly characters. (3) Gifts of the kind we study today were temporary, while character is permanent.

3. Some lessons for us. (a) Great ability is often found in poor characters. God endows us all with whatever abilities we have and the possession of these has nothing to do in determining whether we will be saved or lost. Some who possess the greatest gifts are among the lost because they have not cultivated the proper graces. (b) The grace of love is in the reach of all. It matters not whether we are rich or poor, richly gifted or a one-talent man, black or white, we can love God and our neighbor as ourselves. Love, the greatest grace and better than all gifts, may be cultivated and enjoyed by all. In that respect all can be like God. (c) Love will serve more people than any gift, natural or miraculous. Love is a universal need and is therefore to be more desired than any or all the gifts men may possess.

## Introduction

The prophets of the Old Testament pictured the Christian dispensation as an age in which the Holy Spirit would be prominent. Joel said God would pour out his Spirit upon all flesh and that both men and women would prophesy. (Joel 2: 28ff.) Peter said the events of Pentecost

were in fulfillment of that prophecy. (Acts 2: 15-21.) But the fulfillment of the prophecy did not end there, for the Spirit continued to be given in other manifestations in order that the infant church might carry on its work and worship.

How did people come into posses-

sion of these spiritual gifts? The clearest teaching we have on this matter is found in Acts 8: 14ff. From this passage we learn that a man might have spiritual gifts, such as healing, speaking with tongues and prophesying, but still not be able to impart the gifts to others. Philip had these gifts, had to send to Jerusalem for apostles to come to Samaria to impart the gifts. Next, we learn that only apostles could impart these powers. Simon saw that "through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given." (Verse 18.) If these nine spiritual gifts we study today were ever given any other way than by the laying on of an apostle's hands, there is no clear teaching in the New Testament concerning it.

We must distinguish between the

baptism of the Holy Spirit and these gifts of the Spirit imparted by laying on of apostles' hands. Only the Lord baptized men in the Holy Spirit. (John 1: 33.) When men were baptized in the Holy Spirit, there was no human instrument used. But when the Lord gave spiritual gifts, he used human instruments, the apostles who laid on hands to indicate who was to receive the gift. Those who received the baptism of the Spirit had powers not possessed by those on whom apostles laid hands. Men baptized in the Spirit are believed to have possessed all nine of the spiritual gifts, but one on whom an apostle laid hands had only had that gift, or those gifts, designated by the apostle. One would have the gift of prophecy, another the gift of tongues, etc.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Spiritual Gifts Enumerated (1 Cor. 12: 1, 4-11)

*I would not have you ignorant.* Since the Corinthian church was not using spiritual gifts as the Lord intended, it was necessary for Paul to give them instruction. They were using them in such way as to indicate clearly that they were ignorant of their use and purpose, so Paul devotes a section of his epistle to informing them of the source, nature, use, and value of these spiritual gifts.

*There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.* The diversities of gifts refers to the nine different gifts enumerated in this passage. But regardless of how many there be, Paul emphasizes the fact that they all come from the Holy Spirit, they have one source. Having the same source, we should not esteem one gift above another so as to be proud of the possession of one and embarrassed over the possession of another. And since the Holy Spirit is spoken of along with the Father and the Son as the source of these gifts, we are forced to recognize the Spirit as a person, a member of the godhead, one of the Trinity.

*There are diversities of ministrations, and the same Lord.* When speaking of these matters in relation to the Holy Spirit, Paul says there are *diversities of gifts*; but when speaking of them in relation to Jesus, he says there are *diversities of min-*

*istrations.* The fact that they are called ministrations indicates the purpose for which they were given. They were not bestowed upon people for their personal pleasure or pride, but that they might render a service to the Lord. And since they are to be used to serve the one Lord, we should not covet some and despise others.

*But the same God, who worketh all things in all.* This refers to the part the Father has in these matters. In relation to him manifestations of the Spirit are a part of his work which is going on everywhere in all things. Those who possessed one or more of these gifts were workers with God in the accomplishments of his eternal purposes.

*To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal.* These gifts were bestowed for the good of the church and for the salvation of the lost, not for personal pleasure and profit. Simon would have used a spiritual gift to make money. (Acts 8: 18, 19.) Since they are gifts from above and to be used for the Lord, no one was to be proud and haughty if he had a gift which brought him into prominence, nor was one to feel embarrassed or cheated if he possessed a gift which brought him no prominence or glory.

*To one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom.* The distinction between wisdom and knowledge as used here is difficult. Brother Mc-

Garvey says, "1. The 'word of wisdom' was the ability to reveal divine truth which was possessed by the apostles and partially by prophets. 2. The 'word of knowledge' was the ability to teach the truth thus revealed." Another says the word of wisdom is that which sets forth the truth of the gospel to work conversion; the word of knowledge is that which goes deeper into the spiritual meaning of things; one is the milk of the word and the other is the meat.

*To another faith, in the same Spirit.* Faith here is not that which comes by hearing the word of God. (John 20: 30, 31; Rom. 10: 17.) This is miraculous faith which made men able to remove mountains. (Matt. 17: 20; Luke 17: 6.) The removing of mountains is not to be taken literally, for one would hardly need to remove a mountain to confirm the word preached. It was an expression in common use to denote the impossible among men. Notice the expression *in the Spirit*. These things are said to be done *in the Spirit*. This expression occurs often in this chapter (Verses 3, 9, 13), and indicates that things were done under the leading, prompting, or teaching of the Holy Spirit. David spoke in the Spirit (Matt. 22: 43), meaning that he spoke as the Spirit moved him. (2 Pet. 1: 21).

*To another gifts of healings.* It will be noticed that no one person seems to have been given all these nine gifts; to one was given this and to another that. The gift of healing was the power to heal the sick and the lame. (Acts 5: 15, 16.)

*To another workings of miracles.* It is difficult to distinguish between this and the former, except to say that this covers more ground than that. Healing the sick was an act of mercy, but when Paul struck Elymas blind that was an act of judgment. (Acts 13: 8ff.) The idea has been advanced by some that this working of miracles was the power to lay hands on others to bestow one or all of these nine gifts. This writer does not hold this view for reasons stated in the introduction.

*To another prophecy.* This simply means to speak by inspiration of God, whether the speaking be intended to edify, exhort, or console. (1 Cor. 14: 3.) Philip had four daughters who prophesied. (Acts 21: 9.) Paul spoke

of women who prophesied in Corinth. (1 Cor. 11: 5.) In their God-given spheres they spoke as the Spirit moved them; they were mouthpieces for God because the Spirit had bestowed upon them the gift which qualified them so to speak.

*To another discernings of spirits.* This gift enabled men to discern between true prophets and pretenders. Dishonest men would pretend to speak as the Spirit moved them, and the churches had to have some one of their number qualified to determine whether the man was of God. Near the close of the miraculous period John gave the brethren a test more permanent and more general in its nature and application. Any prophet who denied that Christ has come in the flesh is to be rejected. (1 John 4: 1-3.)

*To another divers kinds of tongues.* There has been much argument whether this refers to speaking languages not known to the speaker, or to ecstatic utterance, meaningless jargon, uttered in rhapsody. The fact that tongues are for a sign to the unbeliever (1 Cor. 14: 22) and that unbelievers are brought to faith by teaching them the gospel is enough proof to all thinking people that these tongues in this verse refer to languages. When the apostles spoke in tongues on Pentecost, the people heard them in the languages wherein they were born. (Acts 2: 6-8.)

*To another the interpretation of tongues.* This could possibly be used (1) to tell a man what he had spoken in a language he did not understand; (2) to explain to one portion of an audience what was said to another portion in a language not understood by the first portion. Sometimes this power of interpretation was exercised by the speaker and sometimes it was not. (1 Cor. 14: 13.)

*Dividing to each one severally even as he will.* From this we learn that the Holy Spirit determined who should receive each gift. This is proof of the personality of the Holy Spirit. A mere force or influence could not determine such matters. Further, we learn of the independence and sovereignty of the Spirit. He is under no obligation to any man to bestow upon him certain gifts. This impartiality is implied since these gifts are bestowed according to

his will and since God is known to be no respecter of persons. Since these are gifts according to his will, those who received gifts which brought them into prominence had no right to boast or look down on those whose gifts were not so showy.

## II. Spiritual Gifts Used in the Church

(1 Cor. 12: 28, 29)

*God hath set some in the church.* Paul had just used the human body to illustrate the fact that there may be unity of action and mutual sympathy in diversity of members. Now he proceeds to show that God has appointed many offices and functions in the church, but expects them all to operate as a unit.

*First apostles.* The word *first* refers to rank and not to time. Some have used this verse to prove that the church was in existence when Jesus appointed his apostles, else he could not have set them in the church. But this teaches that they are first in rank and authority.

*Secondly prophets.* This includes all who were not apostles and who were able to speak by inspiration. Mark, Luke, James, and Jude, writers of the books which bear these names, were prophets, as were Timothy, Titus, Silas, and others. This same order is observed by Paul in Eph. 4: 11.

*Thirdly teachers.* Teachers were men and women who used material revealed by the apostles and prophets to edify the church and bring the lost to Christ. If a person taught as the Spirit gave the matter, he was a prophet; if he taught out of a fund of knowledge gained through study of that which apostles and prophets revealed, he was a teacher. Luke speaks of both prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch. (Acts 13: 1.) Women were to be teachers of good things. (Tit. 2: 3.) Since God set teachers in the church and said women are to be teachers, we should be slow to take them out of the place where the Lord set them. And further it may be observed that Paul was telling Titus how to set the churches in order when he told him to have aged women be teachers of good things. (Tit. 1: 5.)

*Then miracles, then gifts of healings.* These were set in the church for the purpose of confirming the

word preached. (Mark 16: 20; Heb. 2: 2-4.) Since the new covenant had not been written, men could not prove their doctrine true by giving book, chapter and verse for what they taught. So the church was equipped to prove its doctrine to be true.

*Helps, governments.* The Greek words used here occur nowhere else in the New Testament. The writer is inclined to think *helps* refers to deacons and *governments* to elders and could cite several Bible scholars who so taught, but freely admits there is no solid proof for the position. However, if this is not the meaning, we are at a loss to know what the early church had which we do not have today. Were these, like miracles and gifts of healing, temporary? To affirm this, one would have to know the meaning of these terms and what functions they performed. If they are not temporary, and do not refer to deacons and elders, it would follow that we are not scripturally organized without them. And if that be true, some one should learn what these words mean so we can put them in the church.

*Are all apostles? are all prophets?* These questions are put in such way as to affirm that all are not apostles, all are not prophets. For all to have the same office would be like a body which is all mouth, or all eyes. (Verses 14ff.) The lesson is that each one is to accept his place in the church and perform his duty according to the ability God has given him so that the body may function smoothly and effectively.

## III. Spiritual Gifts Were Temporary

(1 Cor. 13: 8-10, 13)

*Love never faileth.* In this chapter, Paul is proving that love, the greatest of the graces, is greater and more to be desired than any or all the gifts which so many of the Corinthians coveted. One reason for the superiority of love is that it never fails, it will last forever.

*Whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away.* This does not mean that some prophecies shall fail of fulfillment, but that the time would come when people would no longer have the gift of prophecy, no longer speak for God as the Spirit moved them. This gift was needed in the early stage of the church, but the

time will come when it will no longer be needed.

*Whether there be tongues, they shall cease.* This does not mean that a time will come, either on this earth or in heaven, that we will communicate with each other without the use of a language. It simply means that Paul looked for a time when men would no longer have the gift of speaking in a language he had not studied. This gift was necessary for the growth of the church over the world in that first generation, but it is no longer needed since we can learn the languages of the nations where the gospel is to be preached, and we no longer need to speak in tongues to confirm the word we preach.

*Whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away.* This certainly does not mean that a time will come when all knowledge will vanish and people be left in total ignorance. It simply means that Paul looked forward to a time when God would no longer miraculously endow men with knowledge to carry on the work and worship of the church. It was necessary to do this in the infancy of the church, but when the church reached its majority, was fullgrown, this gift was no longer necessary.

*For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.* One who had the gift of knowledge (1 Cor. 12: 8) did not know absolutely everything about the church which could be known. He had the knowledge when it was needed. He was no more excused from studying than was the man without that gift. His gift served the church when and to the extent it was needed.

*But when that which is perfect is come.* The majority of commentators think this refers to the heavenly state. But it is certainly implied, if not actually stated, in our text that these spiritual gifts, prophecies, tongues, and knowledge, will continue until that which is perfect comes. We are told that, when the perfect comes, that which is in part shall be done away. If that which is perfect

refers to the heavenly state, we certainly have a right to expect these gifts to continue in the church until we are settled in the heavenly state. But if some one contends that the prophecies, tongues, and knowledge do not refer to the spiritual gifts of 1 Cor. 12: 8-10, he has the unenviable position of affirming that knowledge will vanish away when we are in the heavenly state. But Paul affirms the opposite of that when he says, "But then shall I know fully even as also I was fully known." (1 Cor. 13: 12.) And, furthermore, a state where there would be no knowledge at all could hardly be called a heavenly state. So we prefer to say the expression that *which is perfect* refers to the completed revelation of the new covenant. The spiritual gifts were to last until the gospel was revealed, recorded, and confirmed, after which time these gifts would no longer be essential.

*But now abideth faith, hope, love.* Though the spiritual gifts will pass away because they will no longer be essential, faith, hope, and love will be essential as long as the church shall last and flourish on the earth. The superiority of these three over spiritual gifts is seen (1) in that they will last when the gifts have ceased; (2) in that these three are essential to the salvation of each individual, but many even in the days of the apostles could go to heaven without possessing even one of the spiritual gifts.

*The greatest of these is love.* As these three are greater than the gifts because they endure after the gifts have ceased, so love is greater than faith and hope because it will continue after faith has turned to sight and hope has given way to glad fruition. We now believe in Jesus, heaven, angels, etc., but in heaven we will have knowledge of these. We now entertain a hope of heaven and association with the Lord and all the redeemed, but in heaven we will no longer hope for these things, for "hope that is seen is not hope." (Rom. 8: 24.)

### Lessons to Learn

1. Spiritual gifts were never intended for the personal pleasure or profit of the possessor, but for the good of the church. Even our natu-

ral gifts are primarily for the glory of God and the betterment of the world rather than for our selfish pleasure.

2. Since inspired scripture furnishes us completely unto every good work (2 Tim. 3: 16, 17), it serves perfectly the purpose for which these spiritual gifts were given to the church. It is that which is perfect, that which is to displace the gifts and make them no longer necessary in the

life of the church.

3. God is love and to the extent we exercise love we are like God. The Lord nowhere taught that one who exercised a miraculous gift was like God. For this reason Paul taught people to cultivate the ability to love rather than desire spiritual gifts.

### Questions for the Class

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

#### Golden Text Explained

Discuss the meaning of the word prophecy. Why was this gift necessary? What is meant by mysteries? Give an example.  
What is the meaning of faith as used in this text?  
Discuss the difference between spiritual gifts and Christian graces.  
Give some examples of men who had gifts but were without the graces.  
State and discuss three reasons why graces are superior to gifts.  
Why is love to be desired more than spiritual gifts?

#### Introduction

What did the prophets of the Old Testament say about the Spirit in this age? How did people come into possession of these spiritual gifts?  
Can you distinguish clearly between the baptism of the Spirit and imparting these gifts?

#### Spiritual Gifts Enumerated

What condition in the church at Corinth called forth this teaching from Paul? How many gifts of the Spirit did Paul mention? What was their one source? Discuss the part which each, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, had in these gifts. For whose profit were these gifts imparted?  
And what did this have to do with the attitude of the recipient toward the gift? Can you distinguish between the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge? What is the faith mentioned here as a gift?

What is the meaning of the expression "in the Spirit"?  
What is included in the gifts of healing and the working of miracles?  
What was the work of a prophet?  
Can you give examples both of men and women?  
What was a discerner of spirits?  
Why was such a gift necessary?  
What is meant by divers kinds of tongues?  
What use would they have for interpretation of tongues?  
What proof do we have in this lesson of the personality of the Holy Spirit?

#### Spiritual Gifts Used in the Church

Who were made first in the church? What is the meaning of first?  
Can you distinguish between a prophet and a teacher?  
What is meant by helps and governments? Are these in the church permanently?  
What lesson does Paul teach as to the manner in which all these work together?

#### Spiritual Gifts Were Temporary

What does Paul affirm about love that cannot be said of the gifts?  
What is meant by the failing of prophecies? of tongues? of knowledge?  
What did Paul mean by knowing in part? What did Paul mean by prophesying in part?  
What is meant by that which is perfect? What was to happen when that which is perfect should come?  
Can you show that the perfect does not refer to the heavenly state?  
Why are faith, hope, and love superior to spiritual gifts?  
Why is love the greatest of the three? What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

## Lesson VIII—February 19, 1956

### THE RESURRECTION

#### Lesson Text

1 Cor. 15: 3, 12-20, 50-54

3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received; that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

12 Now if Christ is preached that he hath been raised from the dead, how say some among you that there is

no resurrection of the dead?

13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither hath Christ been raised:

14 And if Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain.

15 Yea, and we are found false

witnesses of God; because we witnessed of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead are not raised.

16 For if the dead are not raised, neither hath Christ been raised:

17 And if Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

18 Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

19 If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable.

20 But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep.

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the

kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed,

52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

54 But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep."* (1 Cor. 15: 20.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Cor. 15: 35-49.

### Daily Bible Readings

- February 13. M. Sadducees Denied the Resurrection (Matt. 22: 23-33)
- February 14. T. Universal Resurrection Promised (John 5: 25-29)
- February 15. W. Paul Preached the Resurrection (Acts 23: 1-10)
- February 16. Th. Power of the Resurrection (Phil. 3: 7-17)
- February 17. F. Body to Be Changed (Phil. 3: 17-21)
- February 18. S. Resurrection Past, False (2 Tim. 2: 16-20)
- February 19. S. Hope of a Better Resurrection (Heb. 11: 32-40)

TIME.—A. D. 54.

PLACE.—Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints at Corinth.

### Golden Text Explained

1. Some evidences of Christ's resurrection, (a) Prophecy. Peter says David spoke of the resurrection of Christ when he said, "Because thou wilt not leave my soul unto Hades, neither wilt thou give thy Holy One to see corruption." (Acts 2: 27; Psalm 16: 10.) Soon after Jesus made his promise to build his church he said that he must go to Jerusalem where he would suffer many things of the Jews, be killed, "and the third day be raised up." (Matt. 16: 21.) However, in the early part of his ministry, he made a veiled prediction of his resurrection when he said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (John 2: 19.) John explains that he did not refer to the temple in Jerusalem, but to his body, (b) Witnesses. Luke says that Jesus "showed himself alive after his passion by many proofs,

appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God." (Acts 1: 3.) In each of the four Gospels we have accounts of eye-witnesses of the resurrection. The apostles who had been with him constantly for more than three years, after being parted from him only a few days, saw him, ate and talked with him. More than five hundred saw him. (1 Cor. 15: 6.) No fact in history has better proof than that, (c) Paul's experience. Infidels feel the force of Paul's testimony. He was intent on destroying the church when he left Jerusalem, but when he reached Damascus, he was a believer in Jesus and determined to give his life to preaching the gospel. No one can account for that change satisfactorily except on the ground that he saw Jesus and received his commis-

sion from him. That is Paul's explanation of it, and his life of suffering is incontestable evidence of his sincerity.

2. Meaning of firstfruits. (a) Old Testament usage. God required the Jews to gather the first ripe fruits and grain and to make a public offering in the house of God. (Ex. 23: 19; Deut. 18: 4; 26: 2-11.) This offering indicated that the offerer recognized God as the giver; that as the firstfruit was offered to God so the whole harvest was devoted to him; and that the balance of the harvest was of the same kind, the same nature as the firstfruit. (b) Christ as the firstfruits was the first to rise from the dead to die no more. Others had been raised from the dead, but their new life was temporary, they died again. But Jesus was raised to die no more. (Rom. 6: 9; Rev. 1: 18.) Even the saints whose graves were opened at his death did not rise from the dead until after his resurrection. (Matt. 27: 52, 53.) (c) Bearing of this on our resurrection. If Jesus is the firstfruits of the general resurrection, we must regard it as a part of that resurrection just like the offering of firstfruits was regarded as a part of

the general harvest being devoted to God. Paul speaks of this as the *order* of the resurrection. "Each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; then they that are Christ's at his coming." (1 Cor. 15: 23.) This gives us assurance of our resurrection. If God was able to raise one, he can raise all. His raising of Christ was a pledge that he will raise us, and God never breaks a promise. And the resurrection of the body of Jesus is a pledge of the resurrection of our bodies. If this is not true, Jesus could not be called the *firstfruits* of our resurrection. It is becoming popular among brethren to deny the resurrection of the *body*. They pretend to believe in the resurrection of the *dead*, but they deny that the body which is buried will be raised. Since the body is the only part of man which dies, it is impossible for them to explain how they can believe in the resurrection of the dead without believing in the resurrection of the body. Furthermore, if our resurrection is going to be like Christ's—and it must be since his is the firstfruits—and his body was raised, it follows that our bodies will be raised. If our bodies are not to be raised, then we have every right to deny that his body was raised.

### Introduction

The resurrection of the dead is one of the cardinal doctrines of the gospel. Paul said he received it, along with that of the death and burial of Christ, and devoted one whole chapter to the proof of it. Infidels have always denied the resurrection, for no one can admit that and consistently deny any or all the other miracles of the Bible. We have a few brethren who have been convinced by the infidels that the resurrection of the body is a "scientific impossibility," but since they wish to hold to Christ, they have convinced themselves that they believe in a resurrection. Some say the spirit is given a new and heavenly body when it leaves this. If it is given at the time it leaves this body, it is impossible for them to believe in a future general resurrection. Others say the spirit of man will be given this new incorruptible body at the end of time, at the coming of Christ. And the giving of this new body, which

has no connection whatever with the one buried, is a resurrection. Holding this view, they can believe in something future, but is it a resurrection? First, it is not a resurrection. Something which has had no previous existence cannot be resurrected. God did not bring Adam into the world by a resurrection; it was a creation. If another body is given the spirit at the coming of Christ, that body will have to be created, not resurrected. Second, it is not a resurrection of the dead. If it is the new body which they view as resurrected, it is not a resurrection of the dead, for that body, not having a previous existence, could not be viewed as dead. If they view the resurrection as the spirit coming into a fuller life, it is still not a resurrection of the dead, for the spirit has not been dead. So the man who denies the resurrection of the *body*, which is the only part of man that dies, simply does not believe in the

resurrection of the *dead*. Only that which dies can be resurrected. The spirit of man does not die. Therefore, the spirit cannot be resurrected. But if we are given a new body which has no connection whatever with this earthly body, we could not speak of it as a resurrected body, since it has never died. But, next, we are told that since the body decays and returns to its primary chemical elements, which in turn become parts of other bodies, its resur-

rection is a scientific impossibility. The resurrection of Christ is a scientific impossibility. The forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ is a scientific impossibility. Shall we reject these doctrines? But who knows what is impossible with God? A thing impossible to scientists is not necessarily impossible for God to do. The best answer for this is the statement of Jesus, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God." (Matt. 22: 29.)

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Source of Paul's Teaching on the Resurrection (1 Cor. 15: 3, 4)

*I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received.* Prefacing his remarks on the resurrection, Paul declares that he delivered nothing to them on the subject but that which he had received. In another place he reveals the source even more plainly, saying, "For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal. 1: 12.)

*That Christ died for our sins.* Here Paul tells us that our sins made it necessary for Christ to die; the death of Christ was necessary to make atonement for our sins, to make it possible for God to forgive us on any conditions. If it were not for the death of Christ in our behalf, it would be impossible for us to meet any conditions or perform any obedience which would make it possible for God to forgive us. Jesus was set forth as the propitiation for our sins that God "might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus." (Rom. 3: 26b.) In the development of this lesson we should put emphasis upon the fact that Jesus *died* for our sins. If he did not die, he could not have been resurrected. The resurrection of Christ depends upon the fact of his death, and that is the reason Paul mentions his death in this chapter on the resurrection. Paul says he received of the Lord the fact that Jesus died; he did not feign death. So the resuscitation theory of infidels is contrary to the revelation Paul received from the Lord.

*According to the scriptures.* The death of Christ was foretold by the prophets. The prophecy concerning the suffering servant gives details of

the death of Christ. (Isa. 53.) Many of the offerings made by the Jews were types of the death of Christ and must be regarded as preparing people to understand the purpose and efficacy of the death of Christ. And Peter declares that the death of Jesus was according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. (Acts 2: 23.)

*That he was buried.* His burial attests to the fact of his death. His side being pierced by the soldier, there can be no doubt of the reality of his death. But if any are inclined to doubt still, his burial for three days should remove all doubts.

*He hath been raised on the third day.* Here Paul declares that he received his message concerning the resurrection of Christ from the Lord himself. People who claim to believe Paul on any other subject and refuse to believe him on this are, to say the least, inconsistent. If we can believe Paul on any matter, we should be able to believe him when he tells us that he received his message concerning the resurrection of Christ from God.

#### II. Consequence of a Denial of the Resurrection (1 Cor. 15: 12-20)

*How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?* Paul seeks to prove something they deny by use of that which they accept. Being in the church, they must have accepted the truth of the resurrection of Christ. Now Paul asks how they can deny a general resurrection in the face of the resurrection of Christ. In this one case the possibility of a resurrection is established, and men are inconsistent who admit the bodily resurrection of Jesus and

deny the bodily resurrection of them that are Christ's.

*Neither hath Christ been raised.* Here Paul turns the argument around and shows them they must either accept both the resurrection of Christ and those who are Christ's at his coming, or deny both the resurrection of Christ and the general resurrection. The two stand or fall together. If one can prove that there is no resurrection, he has disproved the resurrection of Christ. And for these brethren who deny the resurrection of the body we pose the same difficulty—if there is no resurrection of the body, neither has the body of Christ been raised. Admitting the possibility of one is inconsistent with a denial of the possibility of the other. Granting the possibility of one forces us to admit the possibility of the other.

*Then is our preaching vain.* This is another consequence of the denial of the resurrection. If there is no resurrection, the preaching of the gospel is in vain. Acceptance of the gospel brings persecution and self-denial, and if there is nothing beyond this life the preaching and acceptance of the gospel is vain.

*Your faith also is vain.* Another consequence of a denial of the resurrection. Faith is vain if there is nothing beyond death. It is vain to believe in Christ, who said he would rise from the dead, if he failed to do what he declared he would do. Furthermore, the work of atonement was not finished with his death, for he had to offer his blood before it could avail anything in our behalf. If he did not rise from the dead and offer his blood, our faith in him to save us from our sins is vain.

*We are found false witnesses of God.* All the apostles, and many others, claimed to have seen Jesus after his resurrection and so were eyewitnesses. If there is no resurrection, Jesus has not been raised; if Jesus has not been raised, all these people who claim to have seen him are false witnesses. If they are all false witnesses, we cannot receive their word on any subject, so there is no basis for our faith and hope. From this we can see why the doctrine of the resurrection is a cardinal doctrine. No wonder Paul said that in order to be saved we must believe that God raised him from the dead.

(Rom. 10: 9.) But the seriousness of this is seen in the fact that these apostles would be false witnesses against God. They would be accusing God of doing that which he did not do, if Christ had not been raised.

*Ye are yet in your sins.* Here is another consequence of the denial of the resurrection. The line runs, if there is no resurrection, Christ has not been raised; if Christ has not been raised, ye are yet in your sins. There are at least two reasons why the resurrection of Christ is essential in the plan of salvation. First, it is proof of his Sonship. Paul said he was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection. (Rom. 1: 3, 4.) If the historical Jesus was not raised from the dead, God repudiated him and his claims to be the Son of God. If he was not the Son of God, he has not the power to save from sin regardless of our faith in him. Next, the resurrection of Christ is essential in the scheme of redemption because it enabled him to complete his work of atonement in the offering of his blood for our sins and do the work of mediation for us at the right hand of the Father. So Paul says he was raised for our justification. (Rom. 4: 25.)

*They also that are fallen asleep in Christ have perished.* This is another consequence of the denial of the resurrection. Those say there is no resurrection must accept the consequence, which is, that all who have placed their faith in Christ have done so in vain; a vain faith cannot save, hence they are all lost, they have utterly and hopelessly perished. Paul does not include those who have fallen asleep out of Christ. We know they have perished, and rightly so; but to think that those who have placed their faith in Christ and have suffered such terrible persecutions at the hands of unbelievers should have added to these persecutions their eternal destruction is unthinkable. But if one denies the resurrection, this will follow as a logical consequence.

*We are of all men most pitiable.* This is Paul's final consequence of a denial of the resurrection. If there be no resurrection, no life beyond the grave, hope in Christ is for this life only. Their faith and hope in Christ had led them to suffer so many

things and to be hated by so many people that if they are not privileged to rise from the dead and live again they are to be pitied above all men. They are to be pitied because of their suffering for nought. And they are to be pitied because they have been so deluded and have led so many others into the same vain delusion.

*But now hath Christ been raised from the dead.* This is the bursting forth of confidence in joyous triumph. His arguments are conclusive; his personal experience on the Damascus road leaves no room for doubt, so in triumph he declares what he knows to be a fact Christ has been raised, and his resurrection is only the first-fruits of that general resurrection in which all his people will share.

#### HI. From Corruption to Incorruption (1 Cor. 15: 50-54)

*Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.* By *flesh and blood* Paul means this body in which we live here on earth. The kingdom of God refers to heaven. Paul does not tell us why these fleshly bodies cannot enter heaven, but reasons are implied in what follows. He calls them corruptible, and certainly a corruptible thing cannot enter into that which is pure and holy. (Rev. 21: 27.) He also refers to them as mortals, and that which is subject to death, destined to die, has no place in that eternal city. There are many other things which might be considered as good reasons why this body of flesh cannot enter heaven. Being physical, it must have physical food, and this would require planting, cultivating and harvesting, and preparing food for the body. All this activity and commerce would involve us in the endless round of activities which breed troubles and heartaches in this life. A body fitted for a material world so constructed as to enjoy things temporal and physical would be out of place in a spiritual world.

*7 tell you a mystery.* Let us remember that a mystery is not something incomprehensible; it is something we would not, and could not, know of our own wisdom or learn by scientific experimentation. Mysteries must be revealed. And after they are revealed the matter may be as simple as this mystery Paul reveals in this case.

We all *shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed* Not every one will die, but every human being alive at the coming of the Lord will be changed. Since flesh and blood cannot enter heaven, it follows that those who have not died so as to be raised in incorruption must be changed without going through the experience of death. It is implied here (1) that this world as we know it will come to an end; (2) that the end will be instantaneous; and (3) that the living will undergo a change equal to that brought about by death and resurrection.

*In a moment . . . at the last trump.* This change is to take place in a moment; it is not a gradual process. Those who reject the miraculous have no alternative here but to reject this and brand Paul as a falsifier when he says he received this part of his message from the Lord. And this change is to take place at the last trump, the resurrection trumpet, at the coming of Christ. (1 Thess. 4: 16, 17.)

*The dead shall be raised incorruptible.* Here again we have proof of the resurrection of the body. In another part of this chapter Paul, speaking of the body, said, "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption . . . it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." (1 Cor. 15: 42, 44.) That which was sown in corruption is that which is going to be raised. Nothing but the body is sown in corruption, and we have proof of that in the statement following, "It is sown a natural body." So that which is sown a natural body is that which is going to be raised in incorruption.

*This corruptible must put on incorruption.* Whether through the process of death and resurrection or through the immediate change at the coming of Christ, this corruptible body must be changed to incorruption; this mortal body must become an immortal body. The word mortal means "subject to death; destined to die." (Webster.) In order to have a place in that eternal world, this mortality must be changed into immortality. If the bodies of these living at the coming of the Lord are changed into immortal bodies, does it not follow that those who die must have a body in heaven that has an essential connection with the body

they had on earth? If our brethren who deny the possibility of the resurrection of the body are right, those who die will have an entirely new body which has absolutely no connection with their earthly body; this new body will just be a new creation. But Paul here says that those living at the time of the end will be changed; they will not get an entirely new body, for this mortal body will be changed into an immortal body. So if these brethren are correct, the Lord will deal one way with those who die and another way with those who are alive at his coming. Our Lord's body was changed from mortal to immortal and so will be the bodies of those living at the coming of the Lord. But if the body is not to be resurrected, those who die will have a body entirely new having

no essential connection with the body they lived on this earth.

*Death is swallowed up in victory.* Death is represented as an enemy, the last one to be destroyed. (1 Cor. 15: 26.) Death has been no respecter of persons, having engulfed all mankind in its ravenous maw. But Paul looks forward to a time when this monster will be swallowed up in one victorious moment. The dead shall be raised to immortality, and the living shall be changed to immortality, not subject to death, beyond the reach of death. By this action the Lord will forever destroy death. Since Jesus, the Lord of life, is engaged in this combat with death, the destruction of this enemy is called a victory. Death is swallowed up (*eis*) unto victory. Death is destroyed in order that complete victory may be had over all enemies.

### Lessons to Learn

1 In the first battle, Jesus allowed death to overcome him momentarily in order that we might be saved. He won by losing that battle. But in the last battle, he will be completely victorious. They win the war who win the last battle. On whose side are you? Surely all of us wish to be on the side that wins the last battle.

2. If there be no resurrection of the dead, Jesus is not the Son of God, our faith in him is vain, the eyewitnesses who testified on the subject were all false, we are still in our sin,

our beloved dead are all perished without hope, and we face the same dark and hopeless future. The word gospel means *good news*. A message without assurance of the resurrection is not gospel, not good news.

3. Who would wish to take this *body* unchanged into heaven? It grows weaker, is subject to disease and decay; it is the seat of lusts and passions which lead to many sins. A change to a body suited to that eternal heavenly place is a glorious prospect.

### Questions for the Class

What is the topic?

Repeat the golden text.

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

#### Golden Text Explained

State and discuss some prophecies concerning the resurrection of Christ.

How many eyewitnesses were there of the resurrection of Christ?

How does Paul's experience serve to prove the resurrection of Christ?

What do we learn from the Old Testament about offering of firstfruits?

In what sense was Christ the firstfruits of them that sleep?

How does this give us assurance of our own resurrection?

How does this idea of firstfruits prove the resurrection of our bodies?

#### Introduction

State and discuss some erroneous views held concerning the resurrection.

If another body is given the human spirit, can this be called a resurrection? Why?

Can you show that one who does not believe in the resurrection of the body cannot possibly believe in the resurrection of the dead?

Why may we hold a doctrine as true which cannot be scientifically demonstrated?

#### Source of Paul's Teaching on the Resurrection

Where did Paul say he got his gospel?

Why did Christ die for our sins?

Why emphasize the death of Christ in a study of the resurrection?

Can you cite scriptures foretelling the death of Christ?

What did Paul receive from the Lord concerning the resurrection of Christ?

#### Consequence of a Denial of the Resurrection

How does Paul prove the possibility of the resurrection?

Can you show how the resurrection of Christ and the general resurrection stand or fall together?

Can you show that the resurrection of Christ's body proves the resurrection of our body?  
 What two things are said to be vain if Christ has not been raised?  
 What about the witness of the apostles if Christ has not been raised?  
 Give two reasons why the resurrection of Christ is essential to our salvation.  
 What of those who have already died if Christ has not been raised?  
 What of the state of the living if there is to be no resurrection?  
 What is Paul's triumphant conclusion?

**From Corruption to Incorruption**

State and discuss several reasons why flesh and blood cannot enter heaven.  
 What is the mystery Paul reveals to us in this lesson?

What are the implications of the statement that all living at the end will be changed?  
 What statement does Paul make which cannot be accepted by those who deny the miraculous?  
 What is to be raised in incorruption?  
 What is the meaning of mortals? of immortality?  
 Will the bodies of those who die have the same essential connection with their heavenly bodies as the bodies of those living at the end will have with the changed body they are to have in heaven?  
 What is to happen to death?  
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

**Lesson IX—February 26, 1956**

**THE EFFECT OF PAUL'S FIRST EPISTLE**

**Lesson Text**

2 Cor. 2: 3-9; 7: 8-12

3 And I wrote this very thing, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is *the joy* of you all.

4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be made sorry, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.

5 But if any hath caused sorrow, he hath caused sorrow, not to me, but in part (that I press not too heavily) to you all.

6 Sufficient to such a one is this punishment which was *inflicted* by the many;

7 So that contrariwise ye should rather forgive him and comfort him, lest by any means such a one should be swallowed up with his overmuch sorrow.

8 Wherefore I beseech you to confirm *your* love toward him.

9 For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye are obedient in all things.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men*" (2 Cor. 3: 2.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Cor. 1: 1-22.

**Daily Bible Readings**

- February 20. M. . . . . Paul Writes to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1: 1-9)
- February 21. T. . . . . Purpose for Which Paul Wrote (1 Cor. 4: 14-21)
- February 22. W. . . . . An Earlier Letter to the Church (1 Cor. 5: 9-13)

February 23.	T. . . . .	Questions Submitted to Paul (1 Cor. 7: 1-7)
February 24.	F. . . . .	Salutations to the Saints (1 Cor. 16: 19-24)
February 25.	S. . . . .	The Second Epistle to Corinth (2 Cor. 1: 1-11)
February 26.	S. . . . .	Paul's Regard for the Corinthians (2 Cor. 6: 1-13)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints at Corinth.

### Golden Text Explained

1. The setting of the text. The verse preceding our text indicates that people in the church at Corinth had suggested that Paul did not come to them with proper recommendations, that he should have letters of commendation as other men, and especially as those who were his enemies. "Evidently his opponents at Corinth had come thither with letters of commendation, either from brethren of repute, or from churches, and had drawn disparaging contrasts between their own formal, official letter-proved standing in the church, and what they were pleased to describe as Paul's self-asserted, self-manufactured, boast-sustained standing. The apostle therefore turns the edge of their own weapon against them, and shows how ridiculous their claims to reverence and respect were in comparison with his own. Such powerless creatures needed letters of commendation—it was all they had to commend them! Without letters they would be utter nobodies. But the letter which was the top of their honor did not rise to the level of the bottom of the apostle's honor. For himself how ridiculous such letters would be! Could he bring a letter to them? it would be like a father seeking introduction and commendation to his own children." (McGarvey.)

2. Christians are letters concerning the work done by their teachers. Paul said he did not need a letter of commendation, for the church at Corinth told all who knew about it what they wished to know about his work. In his warning to beware of false prophets, Jesus said, "By their fruits ye shall know them." (Matt. 7: 16.) And teachers today can be judged by the life and teaching of their pupils. Men who are hobby riders will influence their pupils to be the same. Men who are always negative in their approach, fault-finders, and opposed to every forward move will impart

such disposition to those they teach. "Like people, like priest." (Hos. 4: 9.) College teachers leave their mark upon the young men who are preparing to preach the gospel. If you wish to measure the soundness of a college, study the products of that college. There will be exceptions, but the average product will be a letter of commendation or condemnation of the teaching done in that college.

3. Christians are letters from Christ to the world. Paul told the church at Corinth that it was "an epistle of Christ, ministered by us." So churches today are letters of Christ telling the world what Jesus can do for people. In some of these letters the world reads how the Lord can transform a drunkard into a clean man, a loving husband and a provident father a good citizen and a fine example for the boys of the community to follow. In others the world is told how the Lord can lift a woman out of shame and immorality to make of her a chaste wife and devoted mother, an effective church worker and an example of modesty and purity for all the girls of the community to follow. However, some of these letters are telling the world that the Lord cannot do anything worth while for people. Of course they are giving out a false impression, but it remains a fact that the Lord has not been able to do them much good, and only because they refuse to allow him to have his way in their life.

4. These letters are known and read by all men. If the Lord is writing a message of purity and devotion to read it and be benefited. If he is writing a message of sacrifice and self-surrender to the Lord's way of life, the world will know about it. On the other hand, if the message is one of selfishness, greed, indifference to things spiritual and intense love and appreciation of things worldly,

the world will read that. This letter the Lord is writing is not a secret; it cannot be hid from the world; it is known and read of all men. If you want the world to get a true message

through your life of what the Lord can do for people, you must seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; love not the world, but seek the things that are above.

### Introduction

Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth was written from Ephesus. It seems that he sent Titus with the group from Corinth who brought him certain questions which he answered in that first letter. (2 Cor. 8: 6.) Paul left Ephesus about this time, going northward to Troas, where he expected to meet Titus and get a report of how the church had received his letter. But when he reached Troas, he did not find Titus. And, though a door was opened to him in the Lord for successful work there, he was so anxious to meet Titus and get word from the church at Corinth that he left Troas and went to Macedonia, probably Philippi. (2 Cor. 2: 12, 13.) It was there that he received word from Corinth through Titus which gave him considerable peace and satisfaction of mind. However, from this second letter we learn that, though the majority of the church received his letter as they

should, there was a minority, encouraged by Judaizers recently come from Jerusalem with letters of commendation, which rejected his authority as an apostle, accused him of false promises and of being cowardly and vacillating in his plans to visit the church. His first letter was written, according to our best chronology, in the spring of A. D. 57; the second letter about six months later, in the fall of the same year. In order to understand this second letter, it is necessary that the reader keep in mind the fact that at times Paul is addressing the majority of the church which received his first letter kindly, respected his authority as an apostle, and loved him as their father in the gospel; at other times he is addressing that "refractory minority" who rejected his apostleship, defamed his character, and tried to turn the church against him.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. State of Mind That Produced the First Epistle (2 Cor. 2: 3, 4)

*I wrote this very thing.* This refers to what Paul wrote in our first epistle, and it applies especially to what he wrote about the young man who had taken his father's wife away from him, as the following verses indicate.

*Lest, when I came, I should have sorrow.* Paul did not wish to visit the church as long as it was in such condition as it was reported to be when he wrote the first letter. He knew that he could not enjoy visiting the church if he had to spend his time rebuking some, chastising others, and withdrawing fellowship from those who continued in sin. The reader should turn to 2 Cor. 12: 20, 21 for a fine statement of this desire of Paul.

*From them of whom I ought to rejoice.* Having planted the church in Corinth and being intensely interested in its welfare, Paul wished to be made happy by them when he visited them. But as long as they

were guilty of so many sins of both doctrine and practice, he could not hope to be made to rejoice; his only prospect was to be made sorry by the very people in whom he should find joy and satisfaction.

*That my joy is the joy of you all.* Though Paul knew that there was a minority in the church who cared nothing for his happiness, he was confident that the majority of them would be glad to do whatever would make him happy so long as it was right. Believing that they were so minded, he preferred to write them a letter to correct the evils than to go there in person, deferring his visit until such time as the corrections could be made and he could enjoy a visit with them.

*Out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you.* Discipline is often a very distasteful thing. A person who enjoys exercising discipline, whether of his own children or others, is by that very quality made unfit to administer discipline.

Paul was distressed to the point of shedding many tears because it became necessary for him to write such a letter as he wrote to Corinth. He was sorry, first, that the church was in such condition as made it necessary for him to write it; and, next, that it became his duty to wound the feelings of those whom he loved. Though he knew that the wounding of their feelings was for their good, was necessary for their salvation, yet the doing of that work brought sorrow to his heart. Men who stand solidly and unmovably for truth and right are often accused of being hard-hearted, having no compassion, when the condition of those against whom they stand and the work of discipline which they must administer wring their hearts to the breaking point and rob them of peace and joy in Christian service. And always those rebellious characters who need the discipline are willing to make such accusations in order to avert discipline or to make their case appear better in the sight of others. This, no doubt, was the case at Corinth and was the cause of Paul telling them the state of mind in which he found himself when he wrote his first letter.

*That ye might know the love which I have.* He repeats the fact that he is not writing them to make them sorry, and then adds that he writes so they will know the love he has for them. Discipline is to be administered, not because one enjoys doing it, but because he loves those whom he is disciplining. Paul speaks of his love for the Corinthian church as an abundant, or abounding, love. This word abundant suggests the picture of something getting full and running over. So Paul pictures himself as being so full of love for them that he is running over. And it is this abounding love that caused him to write as he did instead of his joy in exercising self-manufactured apostolic authority according to the false accusation of his enemies.

## II. The Purpose of the First Epistle

(2 Cor. 2: 5-9)

*But if any hath caused sorrow.* This is the tender sympathetic manner in which Paul refers to the man guilty of incest. How different this is from the expressions of the brotherhood castigators of our genera-

tion! Though Paul was firm in his demand for the correction or punishment of the guilty party, how tender and kind he was toward the one who was overtaken in the fault. (Gal. 6: 1.) The sorrow this man caused was not to Paul alone, but to the whole church. All of us should realize that our sins hurt the church. A proper realization of this should tend to keep us from doing many things we might otherwise do. If we love the church as we should, we will be anxious to honor and glorify it in the community; we will do our best never to bring shame and reproach upon its good name.

*Sufficient to such a one is this punishment.* Paul commends the church for the fact that they had meted out the punishment he suggested in his first letter, and that they had not delayed to attend to the matter. And he rejoiced that the punishment was sufficient to accomplish the desired end.

*Which was inflicted by the many.* The punishment of this incestuous person was inflicted by the many. In the margin we have a note which tells us that the Greek word is "the more." Almost without exception commentators say this means that a majority of the church agreed with Paul and obeyed his order to punish the man in the hope of getting him to cease living in sin. This also suggests that discipline is a matter for the church and not for a select few. While elders should take the lead in such matters, it is neither scriptural nor wise for them to hear accusations against a member, decide the case, and administer discipline without the consent and cooperation of the congregation. Most any one who wishes to oppose the decision of the elders can go among the members of the church and stir up sympathy for himself and opposition to the elders sufficient to divide the church, if the church is not informed. There is no better way to inform the membership than to allow the adult members to hear all the testimony for and against and to have the opportunity, in orderly manner, to speak his piece in behalf of the accused. If there is not sufficient evidence to convict a person of sin in the minds of the majority of the people, the church is not ready to withdraw fellowship. But if the evidence is sufficient to convict one

of sin in the minds of the majority, every right-thinking person should consent for discipline to be administered and be willing to cooperate. One who admits the evidence, but refuses to consent to discipline, is himself a subject for discipline.

*Ye should rather forgive him and comfort him.* From this we see that the punishment inflicted by the church accomplished its purpose, and so the letter of Paul had done the work for which it was written. His purpose so far as this man was concerned had been accomplished. Now that the man has turned from his sins, the church should forgive and comfort him. To forgive means that they will receive him back into their fellowship and love just as if he had never committed the sin. This is a very difficult thing to do, and many people seem never able to exercise such forgiveness. However, Jesus tells us that, if we do not forgive those who sin against us, our heavenly Father will not forgive us. (Matt. 6: 14, 15.) It should be noticed, too, that this man was guilty of incest, inexcusable immorality. And yet Paul says he is to be forgiven and received into the fellowship of the church just like he had never done wrong. We should be careful lest we find ourselves in the position of the "elder brother" who, though guilty of self-righteousness, jealousy, and an unforgiving heart, was unwilling to receive his brother who had been guilty of immorality. Jesus pictured him as being as much in need of the love and mercy of his father as was the prodigal. (Luke 15.) And since Paul asked the church to comfort the man, we conclude that he was much grieved and deeply penitent for his sin. This shows that the church is not merely to forgive the sinner, but be actively engaged in the behalf of the person's comfort. This was necessary in order to assure him of their love.

*Lest by any means such a one should be swallowed up.* Paul was afraid the man might be overcome by his great sorrow. This is another indication of his genuine repentance. This also suggests that punishment for sin can be carried beyond the point where it does good. The sinner is to be disciplined sufficiently to make him realize and quit his

sins, but not enough to discourage him to turn from the church.

*Confirm your love toward him.* In response to his forgiveness, they were to forgive him, comfort him, and confirm their love toward him. This last likely included some public act or statement which would counteract the public move of exclusion from their fellowship. It was such as would assure him of the love and confidence of the church.

*That I might know the proof of you.* Paul sums up the purpose of his first epistle in these words. He wished to prove, try, them to see if they would be obedient to his teaching. It seems that this case of the incestuous man was the test. If they would submit to his authority and do as he demanded with reference to this man, Paul would know that they regarded his authority as binding and his apostleship as from the Lord.

### III. Results of the First Epistle (2

Cor. 7: 8-12)

*Though I made you sorry with my epistle.* The first statement of result we find is that the church was made sorry for the condition which Paul criticized. He had been able to make them realize that the condition was not good, not acceptable to the Lord, and they had been made to sorrow for their wrongs.

*I do not regret it.* In this verse the King James Version uses the word *repent* instead of *regret*. Paul did not repent of his act or manner of writing that letter. Since he acted under inspiration, both as to the act of writing and the manner of expression, he could not repent without sinning against God. However, there was a time when he regretted that he had to write it. His love for the church, his anxiety lest the church refuse to accept his authority and obey his teaching, and his fear lest his enemies at Corinth make capital of his seeming harshness in dealing with the sinner, all these combined to cause Paul to regret writing the letter. But since he had met Titus in Macedonia and had heard that the church was made sorry and had turned from its wrong to do right, he could say that he no longer regrets writing it.

*Ye were made sorry unto repentance.* He could even say now that

he was glad they were made sorry, since that sorrow was unto repentance. His fear was that their sorrow might lead them to a rejection of him as their teacher and to place themselves under the guidance of those Judaizing teachers who were his enemies. This, of course, would mean the apostasy of the church and the loss of many Gentiles who would refuse to submit to the Jewish law and ceremonies.

*Ye were made sorry after a godly sort.* Their sorrow was one which grew out of a realization that they were going contrary to the will of God. A worldly sorrow is one produced by worldly considerations. Such sorrow does not lead to repentance.

*Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation.* From this we should learn (1) that godly sorrow is not repentance. Many people think they have repented when the truth is they are only sorry for their sins. (2) Godly sorrow works, causes, repentance. If repentance is the effect, it must be different from the sorrow which is the cause. Since godly sorrow causes repentance, we should not speak lightly of it nor discourage a manifestation of such sorrow. We ought rather to cultivate by all scriptural means possible genuine godly sorrow for sin so that true repentance might be worked in the heart. (3) Repentance is unto, carries one toward, salvation. This makes repentance an essential condition of salvation from sin. (4) Repentance is not reformation of life, but is the cause of reformation. Hence repentance is that change of mind which is caused by godly sorrow and itself causes a reformation of life; it is that mental turn away from sin and a determination to do right.

*Which bringeth no regret.* The repentance which godly sorrow causes brings no regrets. No man ever regretted turning from sin and turning to God. Even those who have failed to remain faithful to God, have gone back into the mire of sin, will not tell you that they regret trying to live for God. This should be a powerful incentive to move men to turn from the love of sin and make a sincere effort to live for God. Even if they fail, they will never have any regrets that they made the effort.

*The sorrow of the world worketh*

*death.* Since godly sorrow is that produced by a realization of being out of harmony with God, a worldly sorrow may be defined as one produced by worldly considerations, being out of adjustment with the world. When people sorrow over the loss of wealth, or failure to realize their worldly ambitions, they have a sorrow of the world. Judas was sorry he had betrayed innocent blood, but his sorrow was not a realization of his sin which grew out of a love for God and right. When one is bowed in godly sorrow, he looks to God for relief, willing to conform to the will of God to gain that relief; but when one is bent under the weight of worldly sorrow, he does not look to God for relief. And since this sorrow of the world does not incline one to look to God for help, it can only work death. In God alone is there life, and any force or influence which turns one away from God tends only toward death. If the degree of sorrow is such as to be beyond one's power to control, as was that of Judas, death is the immediate result.

*What earnest care it wrought in you.* This godly sorrow brought about a number of things in the church. The first is an earnest care. It gave them some care or concern for their condition before God and the community. Whereas they were indifferent to their conditions, they are now deeply concerned.

*What clearing of yourselves.* The Greek here is the word from which we get our word *apology*. Whereas the church was puffed up over the young man's sin (1 Cor. 5: 2), they now are anxious to clear themselves of the reputation of having an incestuous person among them. Their godly sorrow had led them to take such steps as would clear themselves of such a reputation.

*What indignation.* Whereas they were once unconcerned about the sin, they now are indignant that such a condition was ever allowed among them. Our Lord exercised righteous indignation on different occasions when sin was obvious and sinners were bold. People who can behold sin and smile at the sinner rather than be indignant at the impiety and boldness of the sinner are not like our Lord. We must cultivate an abhorrence of sin if we ever hope

to enjoy that home where sin can never enter.

*What fear . . . zeal . . . avenging.* There was fear lest the sun might be repeated in some one who was influenced by the man involved; fear that it might retard the growth of

the church and the salvation of souls. There was zeal to bring the man to repentance and remove the cloud of reproach which hung over the church. They had avenged the church in that they had taken prompt action to punish the sinner.

### Lessons to Learn

1. Though firm in his demands for reformation in the church, Paul's tender sympathy manifested itself in anxious care, loving words, and many tears. Critics who criticize for the joy of being critical or for the joy of exposing a brother have no right to claim Paul as an example.

2. The church should exercise more discipline and put a stop to worldliness in the church. Instead of losing the respect of the world on account of the trouble, the church will gain

the respect of pious people of the world for maintaining a high moral standard.

3. All men sorrow at one time or another. Some sorrow because they realize they have sinned against God; they go to God for relief, and in God's appointed way find forgiveness. So try to solve their own problems, bear their own burdens, refuse to turn to God for help; this sorrow leads to death and destruction.

### Questions for the Class

What is the topic?

Repeat the golden text.

Give the time, place, and persons.

#### Golden Text Explained

Discuss the setting of our text.

In what way are pupils letters written by the teacher?

In what way is Christ writing letters to the world?

Illustrate the different messages these letters bear

How public are these letters of Christ to the world?

How can we bear a true message for Christ to the world?

#### Introduction

Where was Paul when he wrote First Corinthians? Second Corinthians?

Why had Paul gone into Macedonia at this time?

What indicates his intense desire to hear from the church at Corinth?

What do you know of the attitude of the majority of the church toward Paul?

What was the attitude of the minority? Who led that group?

State of Mind That Produced the First Epistle

What did Paul seek to avoid by writing the first epistle?

What did Paul have a right to expect from the church at Corinth?

In what confidence did he write that letter?

How did Paul describe his mental state while writing the letter?

Of what are men who stand solidly for truth and right often accused? Why?

What reason does Paul give for writing as he did?

What is the picture suggested by abounding love?

#### The Purpose of the First Epistle

To whom had the sinner caused sorrow at Corinth?

Was Paul satisfied with the punishment the church gave the sinner?

Discuss the problem of how to administer discipline to such a sinner.

What part are elders to have in discipline?

What part does the congregation have in withdrawing fellowship?

What is the danger of elders alone withdrawing fellowship?

What did Paul advise the church to do when the sinner repented?

What is included in the comfort the church was to give?

What would be your attitude if a notoriously immoral person should repent and turn to the church for encouragement and fellowship?

What is the danger of too much punishment of the sinner?

What is meant by confirming your love for the sinner?

In what words does Paul sum up the purpose of his first epistle?

#### Results of the First Epistle

What is the first result as stated by Paul?

Why did Paul regret writing the first letter?

What kind of sorrow did his letter cause in their hearts?

What is the result of this kind of sorrow? Can you distinguish between godly sorrow and repentance?

Can you show from this text that repentance is essential to salvation?

What distinction can you make between godly sorrow and sorrow of the world?

What is it that Paul says brings no regret? Why?

What does the sorrow of the world bring? Give an example of that kind of sorrow.

Name and discuss several things which godly sorrow brought to the church at Corinth.

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

Lesson X—March 4, 1956

PAUL'S CONCERN FOR THE CHURCH

Lesson Text

2 Cor. 6: 11-13; 7: 2-4, 13-16; 11: 1-3

11 Our mouth is open unto you, O C6-rin'-thi-ans, our heart is enlarged.

12 Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own affections.

13 Now for a recompense in like kind (I speak as unto my children), be ye also enlarged.

2 Open your hearts to us: we wronged no man, we corrupted no man, we took advantage of no man.

3 I say it not to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die together and live together.

4 Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying on your behalf: I am filled with comfort, I overflow with joy in all our affliction.

13 Therefore we have been comforted: and in our comfort we joyed the more exceedingly for the joy of Ti'-tus, because his spirit hath been refreshed by you all.

14 For if in anything I have gloried to him on your behalf, I was not put to shame; but as we spake all things to you in truth, so our glorying also which I made before Ti'-tus was found to be truth.

15 And his affection is more abundantly toward you, while he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him.

16 I rejoice that in everything I am of good courage concerning you.

1 Would that ye could bear with me in a little foolishness: but indeed ye do bear with me.

2 For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I seek not yours, but you" (2 Cor. 12: 14.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Cor. 6: 1-10.

Daily Bible Readings

February 27.	M.	Satan's Devices (2 Cor. 2: 5-11)
February 28.	T.	Warnings Needed (2 Cor. 2: 1-4)
February 29.	W.	The Devil's Subtlety (2 Cor. 11: 1-3)
March 1.	T.	The Devil, a Roaring Lion (1 Pet. 5: 1-11)
March 2.	F.	Jesus Resisting Temptation (Matt. 4: 1-11)
March 3.	S.	A Way of Escape Provided (1 Cor. 10: 1-13)
March 4.	S.	Watchfulness Enjoined (1 Cor. 16: 13)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints at Corinth.

Golden Text Explained

1. I seek not yours, (a) Our text suggest Paul's unselfishness, his freedom from covetousness. He told the elders at Ephesus, "I coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel." (Acts 20: 33.) And he affirmed that he did not use a "cloak of covetousness." (1 Thess. 2: 5b.) By this he means that he did not pretend to be unselfish when his covetousness was

merely cloaked by a show of piety. And the fact that he worked with his own hands was all the proof he needed. (b) He often worked to support himself and others. "Ye yourselves know that these hands ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me." (Acts 20: 34.) And the fact that he did not accept wages from the church

at Corinth that he might not be a burden to them was proof that he was not seeking wealth from them. (2 Cor. 11: 8, 9; 12: 13.) And his work at other places proves his unselfishness. (1 Thess. 2: 9; 2 Thess. 3: 8, 9.) (c) Our text is proof that Paul believed the statement of Jesus which only Paul preserved for us, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20: 35b.) Paul did not seek that which belonged to the brethren at Corinth, or anywhere else, because he preferred to give to them instead of receiving from them. This world would be a better place to live if all men would cultivate this attitude.

2. We seek you. This text is a brief but beautiful way of denying any interest in material benefits, but claiming a burning passion for the spiritual welfare of those to whom he was writing. (a) Paul was seeking them as a father provides for his own. In the phrase following our text we read, "For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children." (2 Cor. 12: 14b.) This indicates that Paul viewed himself as their father in the gospel and that he was seeking their good because of that relationship. To another church he wrote, "As ye know how we dealt with each one of you, as a father with his own children, exhorting you, and encouraging you." (1 Thess. 2: 11.) (b) His attitude toward them was that of a nurse caring for her own child. "But we were gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children." (1 Thess. 2: 7.) A nurse would be expected to deal gently and tenderly with any mother's child, but she would put a degree of motherly affection into the handling of her own child beyond what she would exer-

cise in dealing with others. So Paul claims again that parental tenderness in his dealings with his children for their welfare rather than a selfish interest in them for what he can get from them. (c) His attitude was that of an apostle of the Lord into whose hands had been given the care of Gentile churches. He expressed this concern for the church at Rome, saying that grace had been given him that he might minister to the Gentiles. (Rom. 15: 15, 16; 11: 13.)

3. Paul's manner of seeking. (a) He was gentle. First, because of the value of that which he was seeking. When seeking to win souls, if we remember that Jesus gave his life on Calvary, we will surely exercise all the wisdom and patience at our command. Some handle souls about like the switchman handles boxcars in the railroad yards, plainly advertising a lack of love for them. Second, he was gentle because souls are sensitive and can easily be turned away from the truth. He "so spake" the gospel that great multitudes believed. (Acts 14: 1.) We should cultivate the ability to speak in such manner as to win souls rather than repel them. (b) Paul was sincere in his seeking. (1 Thess. 2: 5.) No man ever gave more or better proof of his sincerity than Paul. And this sincerity gave him a power and influence with people which the insincere can never have. (c) He was persistent in his seeking. He did not allow hardships and persecutions to stop him. He did not allow lack of appreciation on the part of those whom he served to keep him from continuing to serve them. He said the more he loved some at Corinth the less they loved and appreciated him; but he did not let this keep him from serving them. (2 Cor. 12: 15.)

### Introduction

After enumerating many of the physical sufferings he had endured in order to preach the gospel to the lost, Paul adds this, "Besides those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches." (2 Cor. 11: 28.) This expresses beautifully his concern for all the churches, especially those which he had suffered so much to establish and nourish. We are told

that the word translated *presseth* suggests the idea of "hostile banding together against" so as to overcome, to destroy. So Paul views these church troubles and his anxiety because of them as coming upon him from every side for the purpose of crushing him. Those who make preaching a business and expect so much money for so much time spent can never appreciate Paul's deep con-

cern for the welfare of churches. Paul had invested his very life in these churches, and their failure through apostasy in doctrine or practice meant the loss of his life's work and, what meant more to him, the loss of their souls. Men who are paid every dollar their work is worth find it difficult, perhaps impossible, to have this vital interest in and desire for the welfare of churches where they have labored. For this reason

every preacher ought to do some mission work, establish some congregations on his own time, put some of his very heart and life into these churches so he can cultivate this fatherly concern which Paul knew with reference to every church he established. Yes, preachers are entitled to an adequate support; but preachers should learn what it means to be in want as well as to be filled. (Phil. 4: 12.)

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Paul Appeals for Their Love (2

Cor. 6: 11-13; 7: 2-4)

*Our mouth is open unto you.* By this Paul means that he feels perfectly free to say anything he wishes in the manner in which he wishes to say it. When we are with friends whom we love and trust, we speak freely, there is no need to be careful to choose the right word lest we be misunderstood or misquoted. But when we are among strangers or men whom we do not trust, we speak more guardedly. In his first letter, Paul was not sure of the church at Corinth and was careful of his speech, but since Titus has come with a favorable report of their reaction to his teaching, his trust and confidence in them are such that he open his mouth to them.

*Our heart is enlarged.* The fact that they had departed from much of his teaching and had joined factions wearing names of human leaders had caused Paul to wonder if his love had been wisely bestowed, so his heart, his affections, had been somewhat cramped, restricted. But now that Titus has reported, his heart is enlarged, and his love abounds as much as ever.

*Ye are not straitened in us.* There is no tightening, pressure, or restraint in my heart for you. "You do not possess a narrow or contracted place in our affections." He wishes them to know that the sins he condemned in his first letter had not caused him to love them any less; those sins had made no change in him except to make him more anxious for their welfare.

*Ye are straitened in your own affections.* Paul charges that there had been a tightening or restraint in their love for him. The condition which called forth that first letter was suf-

ficient proof of that. The King James Version uses the word *bowels* instead of *affections*. This occurs in several other places. (Phil. 1: 8; 2: 1; Col. 3: 12; Phile. 7, 12, 20.) Barnes thinks the word *bowels* was never a good translation as the Greek word refers to the "upper viscera" instead of the lower, but Thayer seems not to restrict the word in that way. And certainly the Greeks did not think of the heart alone as the center of affections.

*Now for a recompense in like kind.* Having declared his unrestrained love for them, he begs for them to respond with their old-time wholehearted warm affection for their teacher and father in the gospel. He places this request on the basis of children's love for a father, for he says, "I speak as unto my children." Undoubtedly Paul realized that it was for their good that they love him. John tells us that people who do not love a brother whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. (1 John 4: 20.) Since he was interested in their salvation, and since that salvation depended on their loving him, certainly he would encourage, even beg, them to love him.

*Open your hearts to us.* "Open your hearts and receive us into your love and confidence, for, despite all that our enemies have said about us, it must be apparent to you when you have sifted their accusations that they have proved nothing which should shake your confidence in us." (McGarvey.)

*We wronged no man.* In this statement Paul enumerates the reasons why the Corinthians should love and respect him as they did in former years. No one could say truthfully that he had been wronged by Paul; no one could say that Paul had cor-

rupted him; and no one could say that Paul had taken advantage of him. Paul had gone among them as one who served, not as one who expected to be served. He had felt that it is more blessed to give than to receive. He had not taken advantage of his position as a preacher or as an apostle to obtain money for his own personal use. He refers to this later when he is answering an accusation that he caught them by guile in that he took no money for his services, but took for personal use the money he said he was collecting for the poor in Judea. (2 Cor. 12: 15-18.) Here he declares again that neither he, nor Titus, nor any one else connected with that collection, took advantage of them for personal gain. This reminds us of Samuel's challenge to the people whom he served to accuse him of any fraud or misconduct during a long life of service. (1 Sam. 12: 3-5.)

*I say it not to condemn you.* It was necessary that Paul tell them the truth, and that was that they had not loved or supported him as they should have done. But the fact that he was telling them this truth was no proof that he wished to condemn them or love them less.

*Ye are in our hearts to die together and live together.* In these words Paul tells them that he loves them enough that he would be willing to live among them the balance of his days, if the Lord should will it so; he would even be willing to die with them in the work of the Lord in Corinth if the good of the cause should demand it. There is hardly any way for a man to make a finer expression of wholehearted and unreserved love than this. And on the basis of such a warm affection he begged the church to respond in kind.

## II. Paul Is Comforted by Report of

Titus (2 Cor. 7: 13-16)

*Therefore we have been comforted.* In the preceding verses Paul had dealt with his treatment of the case of incest and the response of the church in that matter. They had been brought to godly sorrow which worked repentance, had cleared themselves, in such way as to make Paul happy. "Nevertheless he that comforteth the lowly, even God, comforted us by the coming of Titus; and not by his coming only, but also by

the comfort wherewith he was comforted in you, while he told us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced yet more." (2 Cor. 7: 6, 7.)

*Because his spirit hath been refreshed by you.* Titus was Paul's son in the gospel and, on this occasion, was Paul's personal representative and bearer of that first letter to the church. (2 Cor. 12: 18.) The way the church would receive and treat Paul's personal representative would indicate how he would be received if he were to go in person. So when the church received Titus wholeheartedly and was so hospitable toward him, Paul not only appreciated his representative being accorded such welcome, but he rejoiced to feel that they would accord him such treatment.

*If in anything I have gloried to him.* This language implies that Paul had indulged in some predictions as to the manner in which the church would respond to his letter. He had gloried on their behalf; he had predicted that they would respond gloriously.

*Our glorying . . . was found to be truth.* Paul was happy to be able to say that they had come through in every way as he had expected and predicted to Titus they would respond. And for this reason he was not put to shame before Titus for the predictions he had made respecting them. Paul wanted the church to know that, though he had written plainly and on some points rather severely, he felt that he knew their hearts too well to think they would reject the truth and continue to live in such sins as they had allowed to creep in among them. He wanted them to know that he had confidence in them to do the right thing when it was called to their attention. When people are fundamentally right, they will not go very far wrong; and wherein they go wrong they will make it right if only they are made to see and realize their departures from right.

*His affection is more abundantly toward you.* This reveals the response of Titus to the fine reception and hospitable treatment accorded him while on that mission. Gratitude is a fine quality. Appreciation for the friendship and hospitality of others is a quality that should be

cultivated meticulously and unceasingly. Most of us are prone to neglect these fine qualities. Preachers are especially in danger of neglecting them, coming to think that people owe them the attention and hospitality shown. There are reports of some who complain if they are not shown unusual considerations, and yet they are at no trouble to show unusual appreciation. Titus was not of this tribe. He appreciated their kindness and through Paul let the people know about it.

*He remembereth the obedience of you all.* Not only was their reception of him a thing of rejoicing, but he loved them because they obeyed the teaching of Paul. Good men rejoice when they see people respond in loving obedience to God. Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but does rejoice in the truth. (1 Cor. 13: 6.) Good men are grieved because the wicked do not observe the law of the Lord and "streams of water run down" their eyes because the law is not obeyed. (Psalm 119: 158, 136.) Titus keeps within the ranks of the good when his affection for people is stirred because of their obedience to truth.

*I am of good courage concerning you.* In everything that is right and proper for Christian people to do Paul was encouraged to believe the church at Corinth would do its part, would be found on the side of right. Notice the contrast between this feeling of confidence and the mental anguish he was in before the coming of Titus. He said, "For even when we were come into Macedonia our flesh had no relief, but we were afflicted on every side; without were fightings, within were fears." (2 Cor. 7: 5.) Before Titus came he was down in the valley of uncertainty and despair; after hearing the report of Titus he was on the mountain top of joy and confidence. This should give us a good idea of what the church and its welfare meant to Paul.

III. Paul Fears for the Loyalty of

Some (2 Cor. 11: 1-3)

*Would that ye could bear with me.* It will be well to remember what was said in the introduction to the lesson of last week, that part of this letter is addressed primarily to the majority of the church which received Paul's letter and accepted his

apostleship as genuine. This portion covers the first seven chapters. The next two chapters are devoted to his instructions and exhortations with reference to the collection for the poor. Chapters ten through thirteen, with exception of the farewell, are addressed primarily to the minority who were his enemies. In the eleventh and twelfth chapters he consents to descend somewhat to the level of their tactics and beat them at their own game of boasting, the only difference being that they exaggerated while he minimized the incidents and accomplishments of life. But he cannot engage in such boasting without apologies and repeated requests that they bear with him in his foolishness. We can profit from Paul's estimate of boasting. He calls it foolishness, even when he is telling the truth. One who has nothing better to do than recount and publish his past accomplishments has very little more left to do in this world and might as well fold his arms across his chest and call the undertaker.

*I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy.* This is an expression of love, of the most fervent love. There may be a mixing of figures in this verse. The latter part represents Paul as being the friend of the bridegroom, but it is hardly the part of this friend to be jealous over the possibility of losing the love of the bride to another suitor. But whether he intends this expression to be a part of that figure, there can be no doubt that he intends to convey the idea that his love for them is like that of a jealous person. It is known that jealousy will lead one to do most anything to keep the one he loves. So Paul is willing to engage in the foolishness of boasting in order to retain the love and respect of those he is about to lose in Corinth. But he insists that this jealousy is of a godly sort and so will not lead him to do anything sinful. God represents himself as being a jealous God. (Ex. 20: 5; 34: 14.)

*I espoused you to one husband.* Here we have the figure of the friend of the bridegroom who made the arrangements and introduced the bride to the bridegroom. By this figure Paul means to say that he had been used as the instrument in the hands of God to bring these Corin-

thians into a relationship with Christ which is comparable to the relationship of a wife to her husband. (Eph. 5: 22-33.) Having this interest in them, and having rendered this service for them, he now feels that they should be willing to bear with him while he compares himself and his accomplishments with those of his enemies.

*That I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ.* Some continue the figure of the friend of the bridegroom presenting, or introducing formally, the bride to the bridegroom. Others think this part of the figure suggests a custom among the Greeks of a young woman being put under the instruction and guidance of a man in preparation for her marriage. Either figure suggests Paul's work in teaching the people and preparing them for union with Christ. His one desire was to present them in purity and holiness that they might be, to the greatest degree possible, worthy of him to whom they were joined.

*But I fear.* This can hardly be addressed to the same group in the church to which the words of our last section were addressed. Paul had no fears with reference to them.

*As the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness.* Satan had deceived Eve and countless millions of her sons and daughters. Certainly he was making every effort to hold these people at Corinth, and Paul was anxious about them whether they were of the group

who loved and respected him, or of the group who despised him and rejected his apostleship. Satan is represented as being a crafty tempter, a shrewd, cunning spirit who has had so much more experience tempting people than any of us have had in resisting that none of us is capable of taking care of himself in an encounter with him. This was no doubt part of the ground of Paul's fears with reference to these people.

*Your minds should be corrupted.* Satan has the power of putting thoughts, desires, and motives into our minds. Peter said that Satan had filled the heart of Ananias to lie to the Holy Spirit. (Acts 5: 3.) And anything which Satan would put into our mind would be of a corrupting nature; he is not in the business of putting pure thoughts and noble purposes into people's minds.

*From the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ.* Barnes devotes nearly a page to this, but the sum of it is that Paul was afraid Satan would lead them away (1) from simple singlehearted devotion to Christ; (2) from his pure doctrine; (3) from the childlike simplicity and honesty and sincerity and guilelessness which should characterize the Christian; (4) from the simple pattern of New Testament worship; and (5) from the simplicity of dress and manner of living which are in keeping with those who practice self-denial for the sake of the spread of the gospel.

### Lessons to Learn

1. Those who fail to return the love and kindness of their benefactors, especially those who bring them eternal blessings, are guilty of the basest sort of ingratitude.

2. It is a source of comfort and rejoicing when people measure up to one's expectations in time of trial. Such victories not only strengthen those who undergo them, but they

increase the faith and confidence which people have placed in them.

3. We should remember that we are no match for Satan and unable to meet him singlehanded in combat. We must flee to our place of refuge in the Lord. And we must never cease to be thankful that the Lord provides a way of escape from every temptation.

### Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

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

Golden Text Explained

What do you know of Paul's unselfishness? From what source did Paul receive most of his support?

What statement of Jesus does Paul alone preserve for us?

How did he demonstrate his belief of that truth?

How did Paul express his fatherly concern for those whom he converted?

How did he express the gentleness with which he handled people?

What portion of the churches was Paul's special concern?

Why was Paul gentle in his manner of seeking people for the Lord?

How did Paul show his sincerity in seeking the lost?  
 What do you know of his persistence in his work?

#### Introduction

What was pressing upon Paul daily?  
 What had Paul invested in these churches?  
 Is it possible for a man to feel such deep concern for churches when he had never made any great sacrifices for their establishment or edification?

#### Paul Appeals for their Love

What did Paul mean by saying his mouth was open to them?  
 What did he mean by saying his heart was enlarged?  
 What is meant by saying the people were not straitened in him?  
 Were they straitened in their own affections?  
 Are you acquainted with the King James Version word for affection?  
 On the basis of his love, for what did Paul plead?  
 Discuss three reasons why Paul thought they should love him.  
 In what words did Paul express the degree of his love for them?

#### Paul is Comforted by Report of Titus

What event brought comfort to Paul?  
 What person is connected with the event?

What kind of treatment did Titus receive at Corinth?

What prediction did Paul make with reference to Titus in Corinth?  
 Was it true?

What evidence do we have that Titus appreciated their hospitable treatment?  
 Is it possible that we neglect to be grateful for kindnesses shown us?

What did Titus especially remember about the church at Corinth?

How does Paul express his confidence in the continued obedience of most of the people?

Paul Fears for the Loyalty of Some  
 What separate groups does Paul address in this letter?

What is Paul's estimate of boasting?

Why did he indulge in it?

How does Paul describe his love for the people of Corinth?

Discuss the figure of espousing one to Christ.

What union had he helped them to form?  
 What was his desire with reference to their character?

What power does Satan have over our minds?

Discuss five ways in which people can be corrupted from the simplicity and purity that is toward Christ.

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

## Lesson XI—March 11, 1956

### PAUL TEACHES THE CHURCH TO SUPPORT THE POOR

#### Lesson Text

2 Cor. 8: 7-15; 9: 6-9

7 But as ye abound in everything, *in* faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and *in* all earnestness, and *in* your love to us, *see* that ye abound in this grace also.

8 I speak not by way of commandment, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity also of your love.

9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Je-sus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich.

10 And herein I give *my* judgment: for this is expedient for you, who were the first to make a beginning a year ago, not only to do, but also to will.

11 But now complete the doing also; that as *there was* the readiness to will, so *there may be* the completion also out of your ability.

12 For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according as *a man* hath, not according as *he* hath not.

13 For *7 say* not *this* that others may be eased *and* ye distressed;

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*It is more blessed* to give than to receive." (Acts 20: 35b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Cor. 8: 1-6,

14 But by equality: your abundance *being a supply* at this present time for their want, that their abundance also may become *a supply* for your want; that there may be equality:

15 As it is written, He that *gathered* much had nothing over; and he that *gathered* little had no lack.

6 But this *I say*, He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

7 *Let* each man do according as he hath purposed in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

8 And God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work:

9 As it is written,

He hath scattered abroad, he hath given to the poor;

His righteousness a b i d e t h for ever.

to give than to receive." (Acts 20: 16-24.

**Daily Bible Readings**

March 5.	M	.....	The Example of Jesus (Matt. 20: 20-28)
March 6.	T	.....	Pure Religion and Undeified (James 1: 19-27)
March 7.	W	.....	Job's Regard for the Poor (Job 31: 16-23)
March 8.	T	.....	Jehovah Regards the Poor (Psalm 146: 1-10)
March 9.	F	.....	Israel Taught to Care for the Needy (Deut. 14: 22-29)
March 10.	S	.....	Faith Apart from Works Dead (James 2: 14-18)
March 11.	S	.....	No Love in a Covetous Heart (1 John 3: 13-21)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints at Corinth.

**Golden Text Explained**

1. Giving versus receiving. (a) Independence rather than dependence. Nearly everyone wishes to be independent of his fellow man. To be dependent on others is a humiliating experience. When aged people become dependent, even on their children who love them, they are somewhat humiliated; and to be dependent on others outside one's own family would be all the more humiliating. As long as we can give to others we are not dependent on others, so it is more blessed to give than to receive. (b) Usefulness rather than uselessness. Surely all Christian people prefer to be *useful* rather than *useless*. One cannot conceive of Jesus being useless in this world, so those who follow him and strive to be like him will necessarily prefer usefulness to uselessness. As long as we are able to give to others, we can be useful; when we get to the point we do not wish to give anything, we are useless. So it is more blessed to give than to receive. (c) Expanding rather than contracting of soul. Giving to others expands and enlarges the soul. Hoarding and keeping all we have for our own use contracts and shrivels the soul. Giving tends to make us like God, who gave his only Son to die for us; it makes us like Jesus, who gave his life that we might live. Giving cultivates sympathy, mercy, kindness in that it gives opportunity for their expression so necessary to their growth.

thing which causes people to be thankful to God that we live and are kindly disposed toward them. Also he says our gifts will cause people who enjoy them to pray to God in our behalf. No one can measure the value of prayers offered. The prayer of the poor in our behalf can be worth a lot more than the gift we offered. (b) Giving secures for us and assures us of the love of God, for God loves the cheerful giver. (2 Cor. 6: 7.) Certainly the love of God cannot be bought with money or any other form of wealth, and one who gives with such a purpose in mind will be disappointed. But it is still a fact that God loves the cheerful giver in a manner and to a degree he does not love the stingy man. (c) Giving causes people to glorify God. (2 Cor. 9: 13.) Paul says that the people who receive the gifts will "glorify God for the obedience of your confession"—a demonstration of your obedience, a proof that you are living in harmony with your confession. The Christian should be very happy when he can do something which results in God being glorified. (d) Giving adds to our treasures in heaven. (Matt. 19: 21.) Jesus told the rich young ruler that he would have treasure in heaven if he would sell what he had and give to the poor. Receiving does not add to our treasure in heaven, hence it is more blessed to give than to receive.

2. Why giving is more blessed than receiving. (a) Secures thanksgiving to God and prayers on our behalf. (2 Cor. 9: 12-14.) Paul urged the churches to give liberally because their gifts would cause the people who received the gifts to render thanksgiving to God. Surely we can rejoice that we are able to do some-

3. Opportunities for giving. (a) Regular church contributions. This is the most common and pressing opportunity for giving, and all should *give* liberally, regularly, and purposefully. In this contribution, if the church is doing what it should, we will be supporting widows and orphans and giving to missions, since these things are stated responsibil-

ities of the church, (b) Each one has opportunities to give to the poor individually and at times and in ways when it is hardly possible and certainly not feasible to call on the congregation's treasury. We cheat ourselves of great blessings if we overlook or refuse to use such opportunities, (c) Supporting Christian schools which act as agents of the home in furthering the education of

young people so as to preserve and increase their faith provides an opportunity we should not neglect, (d) Helping worthy but poor young people get their education in Christian schools affords a good opportunity for us to get the greater blessedness. Surely no one whose eyes are open can say that he does not give because he can find no opportunity to give.

### Introduction

When Paul went to the Jerusalem conference and won his point about Gentiles' relation to the law of Moses, he had a general understanding with other apostles and leading brethren that he was to work primarily among Gentile churches. And as a last word for him the other apostles asked him to remember the poor, which thing he says he was always zealous to do. (Gal. 2: 10.) And as proof of this we find him and Barnabas making a trip to Judea with money from the church at Antioch to give to the poor. This was some time before the conference. Then some years later Paul urged the churches of Galatia, Asia, and Macedonia to cooperate in raising a larger collection than Antioch could possibly have sent. His plans for this collection covered more than a year from the time they began until the money was delivered to the poor. In order to raise the amount needed he charged them to contribute each week on the first day of the week to

liquidate the amount they had previously promised. (1 Cor. 16: 1, 2; 2 Cor. 9: 2-5.) Paul and messengers appointed by the churches (2 Cor. 9: 23) and one messenger representing more than one church (2 Cor. 9: 19) gathered the money and took it to Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16: 3). Paul felt that the Gentiles owed such a favor to the Jews to repay them for the spiritual blessings derived from the Jews. (Rom. 15: 25-27.) And he felt that such an expression of gratitude from the Gentiles would tend to soften between the Jews and lessen the tension between the two elements in the church. We do not know the details of how the money was distributed among the needy of Judea after it was delivered in Jerusalem. Paul insisted that messengers from, or appointed by, the contributing churches go along that all might be sure he conducted the matter in an honorable manner both before God and man. (2 Cor. 8: 18-21.)

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Abound in the Grace of Giving

(2 Cor. 8: 7-9)

*But as ye abound in everything.* Paul recognized in people that which was good and never lost an opportunity to commend them for the good in order that he might use that to lead them on to other good things. Since they abounded in so many things, especially in the spiritual gifts, he urges them to be consistent and abound in the grace of Christ.

*In faith.* There is a question as to whether he means the spiritual gift of faith (1 Cor. 12: 9a) or the common faith which comes by hearing God's word. But the possession of either one would be a reason why they should cultivate the grace of giving.

*And utterance.* Here again we do not know whether this is the gift of tongues which is one of the nine spiritual gifts or the natural ability to express oneself. But the possession of either without the love which moves one to give to the poor would make a man like "sounding brass, or a clanging symbol." (1 Cor. 13: 1.)

*And knowledge.* This may refer to one of the spiritual gifts, or it may refer to the natural gift cultivated by study. But the possession of all knowledge without the love that prompts to relief of the poor amounts to nothing. (1 Cor. 13: 2.) So Paul wants them to develop in all the qualities of the Christian instead of having some to a great degree and others little or not at all.

*In earnestness.* This word denotes seriousness and sincerity; it is the opposite of flippancy. They took their church affiliation seriously.

*In your love to us.* Paul had just had a fresh and comforting demonstration of their love for him, and he rejoices that in this they truly abound. On the basis of this love he now appeals to them to show that love by cooperating with him in this great work in which he is interested and which was so badly needed.

See *that ye abound in this grace.* In order to be consistent, to keep from being one-sided, they should cultivate the grace of giving as highly as they had developed the others mentioned. And the fact that Paul admonishes them to *abound* in this grace is proof that we should be liberal, not stingy and niggardly, in our giving. It was to their own good to have the gifts of utterance and knowledge in abundance, so they would be anxious to cultivate them; but it would not be so easy to see the benefit to be derived from giving abundantly, so they must be urged to cultivate this gift.

*I speak not by way of commandment.* Though it is a duty, Paul prefers not to give a flat authoritative commandment; to do so would be to rob them of the privilege of giving out of the fullness of their love and desire to help the unfortunate. He prefers to set before them the example of the Macedonians who gave beyond their power (2 Cor. 8: 1-3), and to give them a test of their sincerity and of their love (2 Cor. 9: 24).

*Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.* The word grace here means a feeling of pity and compassion for those in unfortunate circumstances. This grace in Jesus Christ found expression in that he gave up his riches and became poor in order that we might pass from poverty to riches spiritually. This implies his pre-existence. He was rich before he came here, for while on earth he had no place to lay his head. (Luke 9: 58.) Paul tells us some of the things he gave up in order to become a man. (Phil. 2: 5-8.) This also teaches us that it is through his poverty that we become rich spiritually, and this means that had he not become poor we could never be saved. If we expect to become like

Jesus, we must cultivate this feeling of pity and compassion for those in less fortunate circumstances than we; and we must cultivate this feeling to the extent that it will move us to action in their behalf. If Jesus had simply felt sorry for us, but had never been moved to come to earth to save us, his feeling sorry for us would never have been of any practical benefit. Some people feel sorry for the poor, but they never feel in their pockets for them; they never give any practical demonstration of this grace.

## II. Equality on Basis of Ability (2

Cor. 8: 10-15)

*Herein I give my judgment.* Paul refrains again from issuing a command, but tells them what is expedient for them. Giving his judgment does not mean that this is not an inspired statement; it is simply a tactful way to express the matter.

*Were the first to make a beginning a year ago.* From this we see that the church at Corinth had been interested in this matter for about a year. They had made Paul a promise of a definite amount (2 Cor. 9: 2-5), and Paul wrote them that they should contribute on the first day of the week in order to liquidate that promise, or pledge, they had made, so he would not have to stop there long enough on his way to Jerusalem to finish taking the collection. He even sent Titus and others on beforehand to be sure this amount was collected by the time he arrived so he would not be ashamed of his confident boasting to his fellow workers that Corinth had everything ready.

*But also to will.* If anybody doubts that the Corinthians pledged in advance, this statement that they had *willed* to give should satisfy their doubts. Paul simply says they *willed* a year ago. He then urges them to complete the doing as promptly as they had done the willing. Paul had some fears that they might not perform the act as promptly as they had done the willing, so he admonishes them about it and even sends workers on to be sure it is done. This is characteristic of most of us, and with Paul we can say, "For to will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not." (Rom. 7: 18b.) Upon seeing some unfortunate creature our feeling of sym-

**pathy** is stirred, and we say that we **must** do something nice, something really big and worth while, for that person. But soon other things occupy our attention, distance keeps our sympathy from being so deeply stirred, and soon we can do little or nothing with an easy conscience.

*It is acceptable according as a man hath.* Paul teaches that we are to give as we are able. The Lord does not expect people to give what they **do** not have. The acceptability of the gift is in proportion to what a man has. Our sacrifice is measured not **by** the amount we give, but by the amount we have left when we get through giving. It is most difficult for rich people to make a sacrifice financially. The story is told of a rich man who traveled in a chair car and gave to his favorite charity what he saved **by** not riding in a pullman. When asked why he did so, he said that was the only way he knew to make a sacrifice.

*I say not this that others may be eased.* Paul was urging the Corinthians to give. There was a possibility they would conclude that he wanted them to carry the major portion of the load while other churches, such as those of Macedonia, carried a very small portion of the financial load. Lest they reach such a conclusion, Paul assured them he was not partial in the matter; he did not wish to make matters easy for some and difficult for others.

*But by equality.* This equality is not financial equality between the *giving* and the *receiving* churches. To say that Paul was taking this collection of money from churches in Asia and Macedonia to send to Jerusalem that the church there might enjoy financial equality with them, and to say that this serves as a "pattern of congregational cooperation" for ages to come is to bind a system of Socialism on Christianity which was foreign to Paul's mind. But someone will say that this equality does **not** mean financial equality in the sense that one church has as much money as another, but simply "freedom from want." If "freedom from want" is what Paul meant, he should not have used the word "equality," for equality does not mean "freedom from want." Two churches could have equality and both be **in** want. But Paul was **not** talking

about equality between the church in Jerusalem and the churches in Asia and Macedonia. He was assuring the church at Corinth that he did not wish to make things easy on some churches and hard on Corinth, but he wishes the giving for the relief of saints in Jerusalem to be equally distributed among the churches where the collection was being taken. Since churches and individuals differed in ability, the equality could not be in the amount given, but in the proportion of the gift to one's ability to give. This is what Paul meant when he said, "It is acceptable according as a man hath, not according as he hath not."

*Their abundance also may become a supply for your want.* This has been taken to mean that as Corinth has an abundance now and Jerusalem in need, so in the future Jerusalem may have an abundance to supply the need of Corinth. And again we insist that this interpretation would bind a form of Socialism on the churches, making it necessary for churches with an abundance to bring poor churches up to equality. What Paul means is that the churches of Asia Minor and Macedonia are to give equally, according to their ability. The churches of Macedonia were in deep poverty (2 Cor. 8: 2), the church at Corinth had an abundance. Equality in giving not only consisted in all churches giving according to their ability, but in the church with abundance now carrying the big part of the load and poor church carrying the light end of the load, while in the future, conditions being reversed, the Macedonian churches would carry the heavy load and the Corinthian church the light part of the obligation. Giving this meaning to the word "equality" does no violence to any principle of scripture, is in harmony with the context, and does not bind a form of Socialism upon the churches for all ages to come.

*He that gathered much had nothing over.* Paul takes this figure from the experiences of the Israelites gathering manna in the wilderness. (Ex. 16: 15ff.) Some were able-bodied and energetic enough to gather more manna than others, but when measuring time came each one found that each of them had one omer. And the weak and aged gathered what

they could and found that each of them had one omer. God forced equality there; he does not force it today, but suggests that brotherly love will move us to share our abundance with the unfortunate to the extent that they will not be in want. What law demanded under the old covenant, love prompts under the new covenant is true with reference to a number of things.

### III. Principles Governing Giving (2

Cor. 9: 6-9)

*He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly.* Here Paul takes a figure from the realm of agriculture. If the farmer is so stingy with his seed that he refuses to sow enough, he need not expect a plentiful harvest; or if he is so stingy that he sows only a part of his field, he will not reap a full harvest. So Paul suggests that giving works on the same principle. If we give but little compared to what we are able to give, we need not expect to receive much in return. Our blessings in life are determined by our liberality. The man who puts little into life gets but little from life.

*He that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.* By sowing bountifully, of course, Paul means sowing to the Spirit and not to the flesh. (Gal. 6: 7, 8.) We have seen that Jesus taught that if we give we shall receive in good measure. This does not necessarily mean that if we give money we will receive money in return. Jesus promises a return of a hundredfold. (Mark 10: 29, 30.) If this meant a return of a hundred dollars for every one we give, Christianity would be turned into big business. So many of our blessings come in spiritual forms. But as surely as God keeps his promises, he will not allow a liberal person to fail to reap his reward for that liberality. This should encourage us to invest all we can.

*As he hath purposed in his heart.* This suggests that the people of Corinth had purposed how much they would give, and Paul exhorts them to carry out that purpose. Many good brethren are opposed to the idea of purposing, or promising, to give, but since the church at Corinth under the encouragement of Paul did so, no one should oppose it. There are but two possible ways to purpose. One is to purpose to give a certain

amount at stated times. The other is to purpose to give a certain per cent of one's income. Each one should decide the matter for himself, remembering that his giving is really an investment which will bring in great dividends in the Lord's own way and time.

*Not grudgingly, or of necessity.* One who gives because the Lord demands it and is afraid he will go to hell if he does not give would be giving of necessity. Some give because of the pressure of public opinion; they are ashamed to give a smaller amount than some one else, so they give grudgingly, or of necessity. Some have thought that giving of necessity means giving what one needs for himself, and that Paul here says such is not to be done. If one never gives something he needs, he never makes a sacrifice.

*For God loveth a cheerful giver.* Since God loves all men, why say he loves the cheerful giver? This must mean that God loves the cheerful giver in some way, or to an extent, which he does not love the stingy, covetous man. So if we wish to enjoy the love of God to the fullest extent, we must become cheerful givers. The emphasis here is on the word *cheerful*. The amount has nothing to do with it so long as it is a liberal gift as indicated in the preceding verse. But even a liberal gift might not be given cheerfully and so would not entitle one to this love of God. Whatever amount we give must be given cheerfully. If we wait for pressure of any kind to move us, it is likely not to be a cheerful gift.

*God is able to make all grace abound.* Let no one think that by giving liberally he will render himself poor, or even unable to continue to give, for God is able to make you able to keep on giving. Since the cause of the Lord needs money, if God did not bless the willing givers so that they would be able to keep on giving, he would not be very wise in the administration of his affairs.

*May abound unto every good work.* God has many good works which need to be done, and those who are willing to do these works and demonstrate their willingness by taking part in one will be enabled through the blessings of the Lord to do other good works. It is human to think we can get rich by keeping, but Solomon

says hoarding tendeth to poverty. (Prov. 11: 24; 13: 7.)

*He hath scattered abroad, he hath given to the poor.* This is quoted from Psalm 112: 9. The reader will enjoy reading this entire Psalm about the prosperity of him that fears Jehovah. David says this man that fears Jehovah will prosper. "Wealth and riches are in his house . . . His horn shall be exalted with honor."

### Lessons to Learn

1. Giving is a grace to be cultivated; it is a grace that makes us like Christ, and one which enables us to bring relief to the needy and praise and glory to God.

2. Our abundance may accuse us in the judgment. If we have used it well, it will be a treasure in heaven; but if we have not used it, but enjoyed it selfishly, it will cry against us, be a witness against us before the

And Paul takes a part of one verse to show that the Lord will abundantly bless the liberal, cheerful giver. God is able to make us able to give; it is wise in God to bless liberal givers so his cause will prosper; according to the Old Testament, this has always been God's rule and practice, so why should we doubt? This is a powerful incentive to liberal, cheerful, and purposeful giving.

Judge who "forgetteth not the cry of the poor." (Psalm 9: 12.)

3. The way we spend our money may determine where we will spend eternity. If we sow to the flesh, we will reap corruption; if we sow to the Spirit, we will reap life eternal. Jesus told of a rich man who failed to use his wealth as he should and suffered in *Hades* on account of his failure.

### Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give the time, place, and persons.

#### Golden Text Explained

How does giving increase a person's sense of independence?

Discuss giving as related to usefulness and uselessness.

What effect does giving have on the soul? How may the poor more than repay for our gifts?

What is the connection between giving and the love of God?

How may giving to the poor cause God to be glorified?

What is the connection between giving and treasures in heaven?

What is our most common opportunity to give?

What is included in it?

Should we give individually to the poor?

State and discuss other common opportunities for giving.

#### Introduction

What mention is made of Paul's work among the poor in the Jerusalem conference?

In connection with what church do we first find Paul helping the poor?

What was Paul's plan for gathering money for the poor in Judea?

What assistance did Paul have in taking and delivering this collection?

Why did Paul think the Gentiles were obligated to help the poor Jews?

What tensions did Paul hope to lessen by this collection?

How did Paul avoid criticism as to the way he handled the funds?

#### Abound in the Grace of Giving

How did Paul compliment the church at Corinth?

Name and discuss five things in which the church abounded.

In what grace did Paul exhort them to abound?

What approach did he use in preference to a command?

What is the meaning of the word grace in this text?

How did this grace manifest itself in Jesus Christ?

What is the value of feelings without practical manifestation?

#### Equality on Basis of Ability

Can you show that the church at Corinth promised Paul a definite amount?

How far in advance did they make this promise?

How did Paul direct them to liquidate their promise?

What fears did Paul have with reference to their promise?

The acceptability of a gift is in proportion to what?

What is meant by equality as used in this text?

If some of God's children are rich and others are starving, what effect does this have on the world's view of God and of his people?

Does the liberal giver have a right to expect others to help him if he comes to poverty?

On what Old Testament experience does Paul base his doctrine of equality?

#### Principles Governing Giving

In what proportion may we expect to reap blessings?

What is taught about purposeful giving?

What is meant by giving of necessity?

What is said of the cheerful giver?

What is God able to do for the giver?

What argument does Paul make which is a powerful incentive to cause us to give?

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

Lesson XII—March 18, 1956

PAUL RELATES HIS LABORS AND SUFFERINGS

Lesson Text

2 Cor. 11: 16-28

16 I say again, Let no man think me foolish; but if ye do, yet as foolish receive me, that I also may glory a little.

17 That which I speak, I speak not after the Lord, but as in foolishness, in this confidence of glorying.

18 Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also.

19 For ye bear with the foolish gladly, being wise yourselves.

20 For ye bear with a man, if he bringeth you into bondage, if he devoureth you, if he taketh you captive, if he exalteth himself, if he smiteth you on the face.

21 I speak by way of disparagement, as though we had been weak. Yet whereinsoever any is bold (I speak in foolishness), I am bold also.

22 Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they ts'-ra-el-ites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I.

23 Are they ministers of Christ?

(I speak as one beside himself) I more; in labors more abundantly, in prisons more abundantly, in stripes above measure, in deaths oft.

24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.

25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep;

26 In journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my countrymen, in perils from the Gen'-tiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

27 In labor and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

28 Besides those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5: 10.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Cor. 10: 1-18.

Daily Bible Readings

March 12.	M	Paul as a Pharisee (Gal. 1: 11-17)
March 13.	T	Paul's Conscience as a Pharisee (Acts 23: 1-10)
March 14.	W	Paul's Accomplishments in the Flesh (Phil. 3: 1-6)
March 15.	T	Paul's Sacrifice of Worldly Honor (Phil. 3: 7-16)
March 16.	F	Paul, An Example for Others (Phil. 3: 17-21)
March 17.	S	Paul's Crown (2 Tim. 4: 1-8)
March 18.	S	Paul's Desire to Be With Christ (Phil. 1: 21-30)

TIME.—A. D. 57.

PLACE.—Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints at Corinth.

Golden Text Explained

1. Blessings derived from persecution, (a) Strength. Persecution is to the soul what exercise is to the body, or high winds and storms are to the growing tree. Such exercise tests the quality of the soul and develops strength to resist even greater trials. (b) Purity. Peter speaks of the trials which we endure as doing for us what fire does for gold. (1 Pet. 1: 6-9.) As the fire

takes out the dross and leaves the pure gold, so trials cause us to live closer to the Lord and so leave off the worldliness which tends to separate us from him. (c) Opportunity to be like Christ. (Col. 1: 24.) Paul rejoiced in persecutions because they afforded him the opportunity to make up what he lacked of suffering as Christ suffered. This means the suffering Christ endured during life,

not his mediatorial passion on the cross. Paul wished so much to be like Christ that he even wished to suffer as much as he suffered for doing right, (d) Persecution affords evidence of our relation to Christ. (John 15: 20; 1 Pet. 4: 14.) It is proof that we are servants of the Lord and that the Spirit of God rests upon us. (e) It is an evidence of godliness, since all who live godly shall suffer persecution. (2 Tim. 3: 12.) (f) Bearing persecution is a token of our being worthy of the kingdom. (2 Thess. 1: 5.)

2. Reasons for our persecution. Not all who suffer are persecuted; some suffer for their own folly, others for their meanness. (1 Pet. 4: 15.) (a) Our text pronounces a blessing on those who suffer for the sake of righteousness, for the sake of doing right. If this is the reason for our suffering, we may expect a blessing in return for suffering. But if we have been guilty of some folly or wrongdoing and are suffering the due reward of our deeds, we need not expect a blessing for suffering patiently. (1 Pet. 2: 19,20.) (b) For the name of Christ. Jesus warned his disciples that the world would hate them and persecute them for his name's sake, on account of their wearing his name, or being identified with him. (John 15: 21.) And Peter tells us we should not be ashamed to suffer as a Christian, or, which is another way of expressing the same idea, be "reproached for the name of Christ." (1 Pet. 4: 14-16.) We are to wear his name and glorify God in that name even if we have to suffer as he suffered, (c) For the

sake of the gospel. Paul considered himself a prisoner of the gospel, for the sake of the gospel, "for which I am an ambassador in chains." (Eph. 6: 19, 20.) He says he was a prisoner of Christ Jesus in behalf of the Gentiles. (Eph. 3: 1.) He did not go to prison because of violating just laws; he went to prison because he preached the gospel, because he obeyed the Lord rather than men. This is the kind of suffering that is rewarded.

3. Our attitude toward suffering, (a) We should rejoice rather than murmur. The apostles returned from prison, called the disciples together, prayed and rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of the Lord. (Acts 4: 23-31.) Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God in the jail at midnight. (Acts 16: 25.) We are to count it all joy when we fall into manifold trials. (James 1: 2,12.) If we murmur and complain, we fail to act like Christ under trials, and we show that we do not wish to have any fellowship with him in his suffering for the sake of righteousness, (b) Prayerfully. There is every reason why we should be prayerful during periods of trial. We need the help of God that he may deliver us. (Matt. 6: 13.) We should pray that Satan may not in our trials gain an advantage of us. (2 Cor. 2:11.) (c) We should bear them patiently. Paul praised brethren for their "patience and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which ye endure." (2 Thess. 1: 4.) Both Jesus and Paul are wonderful examples of patience under trials.

### Introduction

Paul endured sufferings in spite of the fact that he tried every way he could to win the love and respect of people. He became "all things to all men, that I may by all means save some." (1 Cor. 9: 22.) Some preachers abuse their audiences by accusing them of dishonesty and insincerity because they hold to unsound doctrines and unscriptural practices. And occasionally such preachers are locked out of meeting-houses and once in a great while they are injured bodily. Then they boast that they are suffering for the sake of the gospel like Paul. Paul was

as gentle as a nurse (1 Thess. 2: 7), as tender as a father (1 Thess. 2: 11), and loved the lost so much he could be willing to be anathema from Christ to save them (Rom. 9: 3). Those who suffer because they abuse people by false and unkind accusations are not in the same class with Paul.

There is a definite connection between Paul's labors and his sufferings, because he chose to labor in fields where the church was unknown. (Rom. 15: 20.) If he had stayed in fields where the church was strong and where members were

influential, he could have escaped a lot of the suffering which fell his lot in new fields. James stayed in Jerusalem, and, in spite of that city being the center of Judaism, he did not suffer as much as Paul. John lived many years in Ephesus, the center of the worship of Diana, but he did not suffer as much as Paul

suffered by going into fields where the gospel had never been preached. Countries under the domination of Roman Catholicism present the best opportunities today for suffering for the sake of the gospel. And some of our young men are bravely enduring real persecution to preach the gospel to people in such areas.

## Exposition of the Text

### I. Apologies for Boasting of Labors

(2 Cor. 11: 16-21)

*Let no man think me foolish.* Paul had no little difficulty bringing himself to the task of boasting. He started in verse one, but digressed; and now he gets back to the painful task by saying, "I say again." And even then he pleads that they realize that he is not so foolish as to boast without being driven to it by what his enemies have done and the response of the church to their boasting. But if they cannot concede that his boasting is made necessary by his enemies, false apostles, he asks them to bear with his foolishness anyway while he glories a little.

*I speak not after the Lord.* In this boasting which he plans to do he admits he is not following an example of the Lord, that boasting is not Christlike. Some take this statement to mean that he did not write this part of the letter by inspiration. But so hesitant was Paul to do this boasting, so distasteful was the job, that, if the Spirit had not impelled him to write this section, surely it would never have been written. Would Paul have made a fool of himself for anybody but the Lord? Would he have done that which he realized was foolish, for which he had no example of Jesus Christ, and which he knew was not dictated by the Holy Spirit? Such a course is clearly contrary to all that we know of Paul. Hence this part of the letter must have been dictated by the Holy Spirit the same as all the rest of his writing.

*For ye bear with the foolish gladly.* This is a reference to the way the church had received those false teachers who came among them boasting of their worldly attainments. Paul knew that they bore with foolish men gladly because they had accepted these men, so he expects them to be consistent and bear with him in his foolishness. While they boasted of

attainments of the flesh, he will boast of the flesh too, but not so much of his attainments as the suffering of his flesh. He takes this turn, not because he had no special attainments of the flesh of which to boast, but because (1) of his natural dislike of such boasting; (2) sufferings in the flesh are more in harmony with the general spirit of Christianity than are attainments of the flesh; (3) sufferings in the flesh for the sake of the gospel was the one thing those false teachers lacked completely; and (4) boasting of these things would serve to give Paul the advantage he desired and save the church from falling into the hands of the false teachers.

*Being wise yourselves.* This is a piece of choice irony. He says they have rejected him because he refused to boast of his attainments and accomplishments, part of which they knew; they had received the false teachers because they boasted of fleshly attainments which they could not prove; and all this they had done because of their superior wisdom. But we must remember, as was pointed out in a former lesson, that such irony is not addressed to that portion of the church which responded obediently to his first letter.

*Ye bear with a man, if he bringeth you into bondage.* These false teachers had forced some rites and ceremonies on the people, or made certain exactions of them which rendered them slaves to the teachers, subservient to the will of the teachers. "All heathens are slaves to their priests; all fanatics are slaves to some fanatical leader; all those who embrace error are slaves to those who claim to be their guides. The papist everywhere is the slave of the priest, and the despotism there is as great as in any religion of servitude whatever." (Barnes.)

*If he devoureth you.* This has reference to the exactions in wages of

these false teachers. Paul had gone among them taking wages of other churches and working with his own hands for this support and the support of his helpers, and now he is rejected and his apostleship is denied. But these false teachers come in demanding high wages to the point of devouring the church; they had fleeced the lamb until they were devouring it, and part of the church preferred such treatment to that of Paul. No wonder he said, "If I love you more abundantly, am I loved the less?" (2 Cor. 12: 15.)

*If he taketh you captive.* By this he means these false teachers were treating the church as if it were a captive group. They were being dominated by these teachers as if they were captives to some monarch.

*If he exalteth himself.* In spite of the fact that Jesus was humble and lowly and taught his disciples to follow his example, the church at Corinth was allowing men who exalted themselves to bring them into subjection. They rejected their humble father in the gospel, who labored with his hands to plant the church in their city, to accept these proud, boasting money lovers who treated them like captives.

*If he smiteth you on the face.* Surely this is not to be taken literally; it is an expression suggesting servitude and disrespect. As masters might smite a slave on the face to remind him of his servitude, so these teachers showed disrespect by their domineering treatment of the church. Paul would treat them as a father treats his children, but these false teachers treated them like they were slaves. His conclusion is that, if they will receive men who thus treat them, they ought to receive him. If they will allow such men to boast, surely they will allow him to do a little boasting.

*I speak by way of disparagement.* This is a difficult verse and variously understood. But Barnes seems to give the best and most plausible sense. "I have been speaking of reproach and disgrace as if I was weak, i.e., as if I was disposed to admit as true all that has been said of me as reproachful and disgraceful; all that has been said of my want of qualifications for the office, of my want of talent, or elevated rank, or honorable birth, &c. I have not pressed

my claims, but have been reasoning as if all this were true—as if all that was honorable in birth and elevated rank belonged to them—all that is weak and unworthy pertained to me. But it is not so. Whatever they have I have. Whatever they can boast of, I can boast of in a more eminent degree. Whatever advantage there is in birth is mine; and I can tell of toils, and trials, and sufferings in the apostolic office which far surpass theirs."

## II. Comparison of Labors and Sufferings (2 Cor. 11: 22-28)

*Are they Hebrews; so am I.* From this we learn that his enemies in Corinth were Jews. And they would, of course, be Judaizers, sticklers for obedience to the law of Moses and for bringing Gentiles into submission to that law. (Acts 15: 1.) Paul was not only a Hebrew, he was an Israelite. The word Hebrew was used by the Canaanites of Abraham and his family. It means a foreigner, or one from beyond. The word Israelite is a term more limited in its scope and, consequently, one to be more desired by those who boast of things pertaining to the flesh. It means that one is a descendant of Jacob, he is a member of one of the twelve tribes. Being a member of one of the tribes, Benjamin, he was of the seed of Abraham and entitled to all the glory which that relationship gave to a man. His enemies likely took advantage of the fact that he was born in Tarsus, not in the Holy Land, to speak disparagingly of him. Being born in Gentile territory, he had been too much influenced by Gentile customs to stand firm for the law, hence his contention for the freedom of Gentiles from the ceremonies of the law of Moses. McGarvey cites a tradition that his enemies accused him of Gentile birth and that he only adopted circumcision in the hopes of marrying the daughter of the high priest.

*Are they ministers of Christ . . . I more.* It is significant that Paul does not deny that these enemies are ministers of Christ. He is content to allow that they are servants of the Lord, but he insists that he has a higher claim to that office than they. He could say that the Lord appeared personally to him and appoint him

to the service, which claim none of them could make.

*I speak as one beside himself.* This is put in parentheses; it is Paul's apology repeated. He was not proficient at boasting. Occasionally he had to interrupt the boasting to admit that he was acting foolishly. But this time he went further and said he realized that he was talking like one beside himself, a madman.

*In labors more abundantly.* Paul makes four general statements, of which this is the first. In his first letter he said he had labored more abundantly than the rest of the apostles, but hastened to add, "yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." (1 Cor. 15: 10.) But since he is dealing in foolish glorying at this time, he does not make mention of the grace of God. It might be well to raise a question as to whether he intended to say that he rendered more service than any of the other apostles regardless of the amount of time, for Peter had several years the start of Paul, and John not only began before Paul, but served thirty years after Paul was gone. But in the same length of time Paul labored more than others.

*In prisons more abundantly.* So far as Luke's record informs us, Paul had been in prison but once before he wrote this letter. (Acts 16: 23ff.) But Luke's record does not tell us of Paul's labors before he went to Antioch, nor does he profess to give us all the details of Paul's life after he went to Antioch.

*In stripes above measure.* Paul seems to have lost count of the times he had been whipped, or of how many stripes he had received. It seems strange to us that imprisonment and whippings should be used as evidence of one's being a true minister of Christ. But such was the attitude of the world toward preachers of the gospel in that day that many whippings and imprisonments were evidence of his being a faithful preacher of the gospel of Christ.

*In deaths oft.* Paul does not say that he had died often, but rather that he had suffered the equal of death many times. He was always exposed to the imminent danger of death. (2 Cor. 4: 8-11.) When he said he was ready to die (Acts 21: 13), it was no empty untried boast as

was the statement of Peter when he said he would die before he would deny the Lord (Mark 14: 31). Paul had faced death so often that he knew by experience what he would do, but Peter had not had that experience when he made his statement.

*Five times received I forty stripes save one.* This was his way of saying thirty-nine, yet there was a reason for it. The limit for one not condemned to die was forty, but to be sure the limit was not exceeded they stopped at the count of thirty-nine. These whippings were inflicted by the Jews, when and where we do not know.

*Thrice was I beaten with rods.* This was the Roman method and was more severe than the Jewish whippings. Men often died under these ordeals. Paul's Roman citizenship was supposed to save him from such treatment, but the law was not always obeyed by those in power. Paul and Silas were beaten with rods in Philippi. (Acts 16: 22.)

*Once was I stoned.* We have the record of this. (Acts 14: 19ff.) This occurred in Lystra and was caused by the Jews from other cities. From this experience Paul seems to have had a miraculous recovery and went immediately about his business.

*Thrice I suffered shipwreck.* This letter was written before his voyage to Rome mentioned in Acts, so that experience must be added to the list. It must have been on one of these occasions that he spent the night and a day in the deep.

*In journeyings often.* Paul was continually traveling from one place to another and knew the hardships of travel better than those false teachers who would naturally take life as easily as possible. He then proceeds to enumerate the various kinds of perils which he had encountered in his journeys. Swollen rivers had to be crossed; robbers were always on the prowl like those who beat the good Samaritan, and Paul had been in peril among them; his own brethren, the Jews, hated him worse than anybody else, so he was constantly in danger of being stoned, betrayed, or imprisoned by them. The Gentiles also in many places hated Paul as those masters of the girl from whom Paul drove a demon in "Philippi, or the silversmiths of Ephesus. Then the cities, the wil-

derness, and the sea provided their perils as Paul went to those places where the gospel had not been preached. Even false brethren, members of the church, added to his discomforts and trials while he tried to take the gospel of salvation to the lost. From within there came the pains of hunger and thirst, while from without the cold and nakedness helped to heap sufferings upon him to keep him from fulfilling his mission.

*Anxiety for all the churches.* All those things from without were enough to stop the average brave soul, but in addition to them Paul had to work in spite of something within which did not bother his enemies. Paul was constantly anxious about the welfare of the churches he had

established and with which he had labored. The false teachers who devoured the churches rather than nourish them would not care very much whether the church lived or died, but Paul was anxious and spent many hours in fervent prayer that they be faithful to the Lord. This is an imposing list of sufferings and yet is not all that he could have given. Since he was forced to boast and since boasting was such an unpleasant task for Paul, we may be sure he mentioned only those things which he thought he had to mention in order to carry his point. But this list was enough to surpass the record of his enemies and to make the Corinthians realize that in comparison to them Paul was superior when measured by their own standards.

### Lessons to Learn

1. Those who are inclined to boast should learn from Paul how foolish it is to engage in such. And if they have nothing more than worldly attainments of which to boast, instead of sufferings for the Lord, they have even less right to boast.

2. Those who avoid the little sufferings of social slight and financial loss by refusing to speak out against sin in their communities should compare their trials with these of Paul and be encouraged to be willing to suffer whatever is necessary to stand for truth and right. And those who do not avoid these sufferings, but endure them and complain about it,

should observe the joy with which Paul endured his suffering and be made ashamed that they ever murmured.

3. Paul's anxiety for the church should show us how interested we should be in the welfare of churches over the land. What do you know of the growth of churches in the next county or state? Do you know how the churches in Germany, South Africa, and other places in the world are doing? Do you care whether they live and grow? Are you anxious enough to pray for them and support them until they can go alone?

### Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give the time, place, and persons.

#### Golden Text Explained

How does persecution tend to increase strength of soul?

Why does persecution tend to purify a person?

How does persecution afford opportunity to become like Christ?

Why is persecution an evidence of godliness?

What is the connection between our being persecuted and being worthy of the kingdom?

State and discuss three reasons why people may be persecuted.

Give examples of people rejoicing on account of persecution.

Why should we be prayerful while suffering persecution?

What qualities did Paul praise in the Thessalonians while under persecution?

#### Introduction

What efforts did Paul make to win people to the Lord?

Contrast suffering for abusive treatment of an audience and suffering for the gospel as Paul suffered.

What connection was there between Paul's suffering and the place where he labored?

In what sense did Paul labor more abundantly than the other apostles?

What countries today afford opportunities for preachers to suffer for the gospel?

#### Apologies for Boasting of Labors

What evidence do we have that boasting was distasteful to Paul?

Give your reasons why you think, or do not think, this boasting by Paul was inspired.

Why did Paul think the Corinthians should bear with him while he boasted?

Why did Paul emphasize his sufferings rather than his attainments of the flesh?

What can you say of false teachers bringing people into bondage?  
 What did Paul mean by saying the false teachers devoured the people?  
 How did the false teachers take the people captive?  
 Contrast the humility of Paul with the pride of the false teachers.  
 What is meant by saying the false teachers smote them on the face?  
 What is the meaning of Paul's speaking by way of disparagement?  
 Comparison of Labors and Sufferings  
 What is the meaning of the word Hebrews? Of Israelites  
 In what way was Paul more of a minister than his enemies?

What did Paul mean by saying he was beside himself?  
 To what did Paul attribute his abundant labors when he wrote his first letter?  
 What do you know of Paul's prison record? Of his whippings?  
 What did he mean by being in deaths often?  
 In what ways was Paul whipped?  
 Where was he stoned?  
 How many times was he shipwrecked?  
 Discuss the perils in which Paul was often found in his journeyings.  
 What inward suffering was added to all these outward persecutions?  
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

### Lesson XIII—March 25, 1956

## PAUL RELATES HIS VISIONS AND REVELATIONS

### Lesson Text

2 Cor. 12: 1-10

1 I must needs glory, though it is not expedient; but I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

2 I know a man in Christ, fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I know not; or whether out of the body, I know not; God knoweth), such a one caught up even to the third heaven.

3 And I know such a man (whether in the body, or apart from the body, I know not; God knoweth),

4 How that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

5 On behalf of such a one will I glory: but on mine own behalf I will not glory, save in my weaknesses.

6 For if I should desire to glory, I shall not be foolish; for I shall speak the truth: but I forbear, lest any man should account of me above

that which he seeth me *to be*, or hear-eth from me.

7 And by reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations, that I should not be exalted overmuch, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, that I should not be exalted overmuch.

8 Concerning this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

9 And he hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"For in nothing was I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I am nothing."* (2 Cor. 12: 11.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Cor. 12: 11-21.

### Daily Bible Readings

- March 19. M . . . . . Paul's Gospel not of Man (Gal. 1: 6-12)
- March 20. T . . . . . Paul in Jerusalem by Revelation (Gal. 2: 1-10)
- March 21. W . . . . . Paul's Teaching by Revelation (Eph. 3: 1-8)
- March 22. T . . . . . Jesus to Be Revealed (1 Pet. 1: 13-16)
- March 23. F . . . . . Jesus Revealed at the Last Day (2 Thess. 1: 1-8)
- March 24. S . . . . . Wrath of God Revealed (Rom. 1: 18-23)
- March 25. S . . . . . Righteousness Revealed through the Gospel (Rom. 1: 13-17)

TIME.—A. D. 57.

PLACE.—Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints at Corinth.

### Golden Text Explained

1. Things urged to Paul's discredit. (a) That he was not an apostle, because not of the original twelve selected and trained by the Lord. From reading 1 Cor. 9: 1-5, we learn that this charge had been made against Paul, (b) His enemies charged that he had never seen the Lord because he did not become associated with the believers for several years after the death of Christ. Not having seen the Lord, he was not qualified to be an apostle. (c) Not having seen the Lord, it was impossible that he could have received his teaching from the Lord, so was not to be accepted as an authority, especially wherein his teaching differed from the Judaistic views, (d) That he was under Gentile influence, having been born in Gentile territory. And one tradition is to the effect that they even accused him of being of Gentile birth. On this basis they accounted for his contention that the Gentiles should be free from the law of Moses with its rites and ceremonies, (e) That he persecuted the church and so should not be accepted as an authority in it.

2. Paul meets his accusers. (a) In his speech before Agrippa Paul said the Lord appeared to him to appoint him a minister and a witness and sent him to preach to the Gentiles. (Acts 26: 16ff.) To the Galatians, where his accusers gave him trouble, he wrote, "Paul, an apostle (not from men, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ." (Gal. 1: 1.) He told the Corinthians they should recognize him as an apostle, though others did not, "for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord." (1 Cor. 9: 2.) (b) In reply to the accusation that he had not seen the Lord, he related his experience on the Damascus road (Acts 9, 22, 26) in which he not only saw the Lord, but heard "a voice from his mouth." With appearances of the Lord to other apostles he lists the appearance of Jesus to him as "to the child untimely born." (1 Cor. 15: 8.) (c) Though

he had not been with Jesus during his ministry, he declared concerning the gospel he preached, "Neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal. 1: 12.) (d) To the charge that his opposition to binding the law on Gentiles was contrary to the thinking of the original twelve, Paul cited the endorsement of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem when the matter was laid before them by him and his accusers. (Acts 15: 1-29; Gal. 2: 1-10.) (e) To the accusation that he persecuted the church he humbly confessed and admitted from his point of view he was "not meet to be called an apostle" (1 Cor. 15: 9), but was thankful to "Christ Jesus our Lord, for that he counted me faithful, appointing me to his service . . . because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." (1 Tim. 1: 12, 13.)

3. Humility before God. When compared to his enemies, he was their superior in any way and from every point of view. Compared with the other apostles, he was not a whit behind the chiefest and felt he should be so recognized especially by the churches he had established. (a) Compared to God, he was nothing. When he thought of the holiness, power, wisdom, and goodness of God, he felt as an atom in the universe, nothing. (b) When compared to what he might have been if he had believed in Christ and obeyed the gospel the first time, he heard it instead of continuing in unbelief, he was nothing. He was so ashamed of his unbelief and disobedience that it made him forget all the good he had done and all the improvement he had made in his own life, (c) Compared to what one must be to merit salvation, he was nothing. His sins were so great and his ability to atone for them by works of merit so insignificant and unworthy that he was made to realize afresh his utter nothingness in the sight of God. This is the attitude all should cultivate.

### Introduction

It will be remembered that Paul is engaging in a kind of boasting which is against his wishes and for which he is unprepared both in disposition and practice. He said, "I am become

foolish: ye compelled me; for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing was I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I am nothing." (2 Cor. 12: 11.) But it is

often a fact that good comes from things which we prefer not to do but feel compelled to do. If Paul had not been compelled to boast, we would never have known of his being caught up into heaven. And not knowing this, we could never have appreciated Paul's humility and lack of self-exaltation as we now can appreciate it. Nor would we have known about his thorn in the flesh,

his prayer for its removal, and the lesson that God's grace is sufficient for all our needs in time of weakness and trial. These matters are not elsewhere mentioned, and we may well be glad that Paul consented to boast not only of the things he suffered in the flesh, but also of the visions and revelations which God saw fit to give to him.

## Exposition of the Text

### I. Paul Visits the Third Heaven (2

Cor. 12: 1-4)

*I must needs glory.* Here Paul again refers to the fact that he prefers not to engage in this type of boasting, but is compelled to do so in order to save the Corinthian church from being taken over by his enemies. He realizes that glorying is not expedient in that it will only give his enemies more material for detraction and vilification.

*I will come to visions and revelations.* A vision is an experience in which scenes are made to appear before the mind as clearly as if they were seen with the physical eyes. The word seems to be used of people without any reference as to whether they are asleep or awake. A revelation is an uncovering or disclosure of some fact or truth which was before unknown, a direct communication of truth from God to man. Revelation differs from inspiration in that the latter is divine guidance in recording both that which the recorder already knew of truth and that which was communicated to him by revelation. Paul certainly felt sure of surpassing his enemies in this field, and yet he is not inclined to make capital of the fact that they have no such visions and revelations of which to boast. Here again we see evidence of unusual humility.

*I know a man in Christ.* Paul prefers to keep himself in the background, or his name, so, like John, he uses the third person. A man in Christ is simply a Christian. He speaks of certain men as having been in Christ before he was. (Rom. 16: 7.)

*Fourteen years ago.* Since this writing was done in A.D. 57, the date of this experience was in the year of 43. Some have tried to prove that this experience happened when Paul

was stoned at Lystra, but that was in A.D. 48, hence five years too late. Others have placed it at the time of his conversion, but that was in A.D. 36. Others have said it refers to the time he was praying in the temple, fell into a trance, and was told by the Lord to leave Jerusalem because the Jews would not receive his testimony. (Acts 22: 17.) However, according to our best chronology, this was in A.D. 38 or 39. Such a vision was given him to fortify him for unusual sufferings, and since Conybeare and Howson place his going to Antioch in the last of A.D. 43 or in 44, and since this was the beginning of his great missionary activities, during which he was to endure such great sufferings, and so would need just such comforting and encouraging experiences, we conclude that this vision must have come shortly before he went to Antioch, or soon after he reached that city.

*Whether in the body, I know not.* Paul did not know whether he was in the body or out of the body when he had this experience. From this we learn (1) that men may be in the body or they may be out of the body; which simply means that there is more to man than mere body, he is something more than physical. (2) That consciousness does not cease when man is out of the body. The man here is the conscious, knowing part, the spirit, that part of man which was made in the likeness of God, which is the offspring of God. (Acts 17: 29; Heb. 12: 9.) Paul knew that he saw and heard during this experience, but he did not know whether he was in the body or out of the body, therefore he must have been able to hear and see when out of the body as well as when in the body. If there is no such thing as seeing and hearing when out of the

body, Paul would have known by seeing and hearing that he was in the body.

*Caught up even to the third heaven.* According to Jewish usage, the first heaven is that immediately above us in which the birds fly; the second heaven is the realm of the sun, moon, and stars; and the third heaven is the abode of the Lord. In verse four, Paul calls it Paradise. Jesus took the thief into Paradise. (Luke 23: 43.) But whether Paul means the limited sense of the abode of the righteous dead is not known. Paul's whole relation of this experience is in rather general terms as the use of the terms "third heaven" and "Paradise" surely indicates. Of one thing we may be sure, this experience took place beyond the limits of the temporal and physical.

*And heard unspeakable words.* Whether Paul means to say that he heard words which he had not the ability to repeat, or heard things which he did not have words adequately to express to earthly beings, is difficult to determine. They were not words which were unspeakable because he was not allowed to repeat them, for that idea is conveyed in the next statement.

*Not lawful for a man to utter.* Here again it is doubtful that emphasis is to be placed on the words so much as the ideas the words convey. Paul saw and heard things he was not allowed to talk about; he was restrained from revealing what he saw and heard. A man must have remarkable control of his tongue who can keep such secrets over so many years and in spite of such provocation as his enemies gave him for boasting of what he had seen and heard. Why was Paul not allowed to give in detail what he saw and heard? Barnes gives a number of probable reasons which we summarize: (1) This experience was designed for Paul's personal benefit to support him when under trials, not for general information. (2) We probably are not qualified to understand and appreciate any statement he would make of it. (3) It is not God's design to reveal any more of the glories of heaven than are necessary for our salvation. (4) We walk by faith, and sufficient evidence has been given us to support our faith. To these we might add that since

further revelations are not necessary to saving faith, our desire to know more stems from curiosity, and the Lord has never gone to very much trouble to satisfy man's idle curiosity.

## II. Visions Entitle One to Glory (2

Cor. 12: 5, 6)

*On behalf of such a one will I glory.* Again Paul refrains from using his name; he was a poor boaster. Some have doubted that he intended to say that he was the person who had these experiences, but there would be little sense in relating the experiences of another to prove that he had things of which to glory. Furthermore, he said the thorn in the flesh was given him lest he should be exalted overmuch on account of the visions which had been given him. Surely the Lord would not give Paul a thorn in the flesh to keep him from glorying too much over a vision given to another man. The thought is that, leaving out the name of the man who had this experience, all will admit that any man who has been so honored of God is entitled to glory. The use he makes of this whole matter is that a man so highly honored of God should be honored and respected by the church.

*On mine own behalf I will not glory.* The meaning is that he will not put himself into the relation of such a wonderful experience. To do so would be to exalt himself too much. When he writes of his weaknesses and of his sufferings in the flesh, he is willing to speak of himself directly; but when writing of these heavenly experiences with which God has honored so few, perhaps no other, Paul refused, even under this provocation of his enemies, to speak directly of himself as having such an experience.

*For If I should desire to glory.* Paul asserts that if he desired to glory he could do so without being foolish or untruthful. He had the right to glory, to use his name in connection with these experiences, for he was telling nothing but the truth; but he refused to do so lest people should think of him above what they saw in him. He did not care to receive honors from man such as these experiences entitled him to receive. Furthermore, when people

saw and heard him, there was nothing that suggested that he was any more highly honored of God than the average human being. If he gloried about these experiences openly, people might place him on a pedestal above what he desired or deserved. In this verse we have further proof that Paul is the man who was caught up into Paradise. It would be foolish for him to say he did not wish to boast about this vision lest it might cause people to think too highly of him, if it was the experience of another man.

### III. A Messenger of Satan to Buffet

Him (2 Cor. 12: 7-10)

*Exceeding greatness of the revelations.* Few men have had experiences which compare with this one of Paul, or if they had them, they made no mention of them. Elijah had a wonderful experience when he was caught up in the chariot and the whirlwind. (2 Kings 2: 11.) But he did not continue on earth to think of it and be tempted to relate it. Moses was permitted unusual experience in the way of seeing God and talking with him. (Ex. 33: 20ff.) Lazarus was dead four days and returned. Whether his spirit was in "Abraham's bosom" we are not told, but if so, he never talked about it for the record. But none of these experiences are quite the equal of this one of Paul. But that is not all, for he speaks of visions (plural) and revelations (plural) which he had enjoyed. He tells us very little about this one and only implies others and leaves us without a clue as to how many he had experienced.

*That I should not be exalted overmuch.* In spite of all his goodness and humility, Paul was but a man; he could be tempted above his ability to bear. If a man of his stature was in danger of falling into the temptation to boast of his connections with the Lord and of his accomplishments, we should be reminded that we are liable to be too proud, though we do not have as much ground for boasting as did Paul.

*There was given to me a thorn in the flesh.* We do not know what the thorn was, but we do know why it was given. It was a messenger of Satan to buffet Paul to keep him humble lest he should be exalted too much by the visions and revelations

he had experienced. We can, however, be reasonably sure of some things. (1) This thorn in the flesh was a physical disorder of some kind; it was in the flesh. (2) It was painful, because it is said to buffet him; it was so much to be undesired that Paul prayed for its removal. (3) It was something which could be seen, or known, by others, for it was given to keep down pride. If other people could not know about it except as he told them, there would be nothing about it to prevent pride. (4) It was something which was of such nature as to be embarrassing, otherwise it would not be humbling in its effect. (5) It was something which could depart, or be removed, but not without the Lord's permission. This is about all, it seems, that we can ever know about this thorn in Paul's flesh. There are many guesses, such as sore eyes, earache, stammering, distorted countenance, etc. The reader's guess is as good as that of the commentator.

*I besought the Lord thrice.* The use of the word Lord here is interesting. Paul prayed, entreated, supplicated, the Lord. When the word occurs without any qualification in the New Testament, it refers to Jesus Christ. And in response to the prayer the Lord said "my power is made perfect in weakness." Then Paul responds that he will take pleasure in weaknesses that the *power of Christ* may rest upon him. So the power of Christ is the power of the Lord to whom Paul prayed, hence the Lord to whom Paul prayed was Jesus Christ. This is unusual, but Stephen did so. (Acts 7: 59.) It is unanswerable proof of the divinity, the deity, of Jesus Christ. Prayer is an act of worship. If Paul worshiped Jesus and Jesus is not God, it follows that Paul was guilty of idolatry. Of course this is unthinkable, so we must conclude that Jesus is God and worthy of worship.

*My grace is sufficient for thee.* When Paul had prayed three times, he received this answer. From this experience some conclude that three times is a reasonable limit set on the number of times to request a certain thing of the Lord: and if it is not granted at the third request, we should conclude that the petition is contrary to the will of God. But this is not in harmony with the

teaching of Jesus that men ought always to pray and not faint. (Luke 18: 1ff.) There is no reason to think Paul would not have prayed a fourth time if the Lord had not responded that his grace was sufficient. By this statement the Lord meant that his grace would make him able to bear the thorn. In this respect the thorn was a blessing in disguise, for if he had not had the thorn, he would not have received the abundance of grace.

*My power is made perfect in weakness.* The Lord's power is most clearly demonstrated in weak vessels. Strength and pride in man get in the way of a demonstration of God's power. Sometime the power of the gospel is hindered, or altogether prevented, by a display of human wisdom, or of oratory, or self-importance. Humility and weakness are better suited to display the wisdom and power of God.

*Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses.* In this we see the complete submission of Paul to the will of the Lord. He desired so much that the thorn be removed until he learned that it was not the Lord's will; from that time forward he *most gladly* submitted to suffer the pain and embarrassment connected with it. It is a great accomplishment to be able to rejoice in a "thorn in the flesh" solely on the ground that it is the Lord's will that we bear it. Paul wanted the power of Christ to rest upon him more than he wished to have the thorn removed.

*Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses.* Paul applies the lesson he learned from the thorn in his flesh to other types of weaknesses and injuries and persecutions. He could rejoice in any or all of them so long as he knew it was for the sake of the Lord that he was suffering. We learned from Col. 1: 24 that Paul was glad of opportunities to suffer because these persecutions made it possible for him to "catch up" with what he lacked in the suffering he wished to bear for Christ. This thorn in the flesh afforded him another opportunity to suffer for the Lord, and as soon as he learned that it was the will of the Lord for him to suffer in this way he began to enjoy it, take pleasure in it.

*When I am weak, then am I strong.* This is about the same thought expressed in the response of the Lord above, saying, "My power is made perfect in weakness." If the Lord's power is made perfect in weakness, it follows that, when I am weak, I am strong because the Lord's power can be more clearly demonstrated. Perhaps we will get the thought better if we say, when I realize my own personal weakness, helplessness, to live as I ought and accomplish all I should, then I lean upon the Lord for help and give his power a chance to work through me, and that is when I am strong, when I am able to do what is expected of me.

### Lessons to Learn

1. There dwells in this body subject to death and decay a spirit which is capable of seeing and hearing things in Paradise which cannot be uttered or appreciated so long as we are surrounded by the things which are temporal and perishable. Yet from Paul's experience we know they are things devoutly to be desired.

2. With exalted privileges the Lord gave Paul a thorn in the flesh to keep him from becoming proud. In the providence of God each one of us is given that which is for our good. We

should be careful to use what we have for the glory of God, being content to live and labor in whatever circumstances his providence may determine.

3. We should pray for what we want until we learn that it is not the Lord's will. Learning that it is not his will, we should cease to desire it and be genuinely glad to go along without it. Finding pleasure in submission to the will of the Lord is evident of one's complete surrender to the Lord.

### Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

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

### Golden Text Explained

State and discuss five things urged against Paul to discredit him.

Can you show how Paul met each of these accusations?

To which one of them did he confess?  
 For what was he thankful?  
 From what three points of view was  
 Paul nothing in his own sight?

Introduction

If Paul did not enjoy boasting, why did  
 he suffer martyrdom?  
 Why should we be glad that Paul was  
 compelled to boast?

Paul Visits the Third Heaven

Why did Paul think boasting was inex-  
 pedient for him?  
 What is a vision?  
 What is a revelation?  
 What is the difference between revelation  
 and inspiration?  
 What do you know of the time when Paul  
 had this vision?  
 What do we learn from this text about  
 the nature of man?  
 What do you know of the third heaven?  
 What is meant by unspeakable words?  
 What reasons can you suggest why Paul  
 was not allowed to tell what he saw?

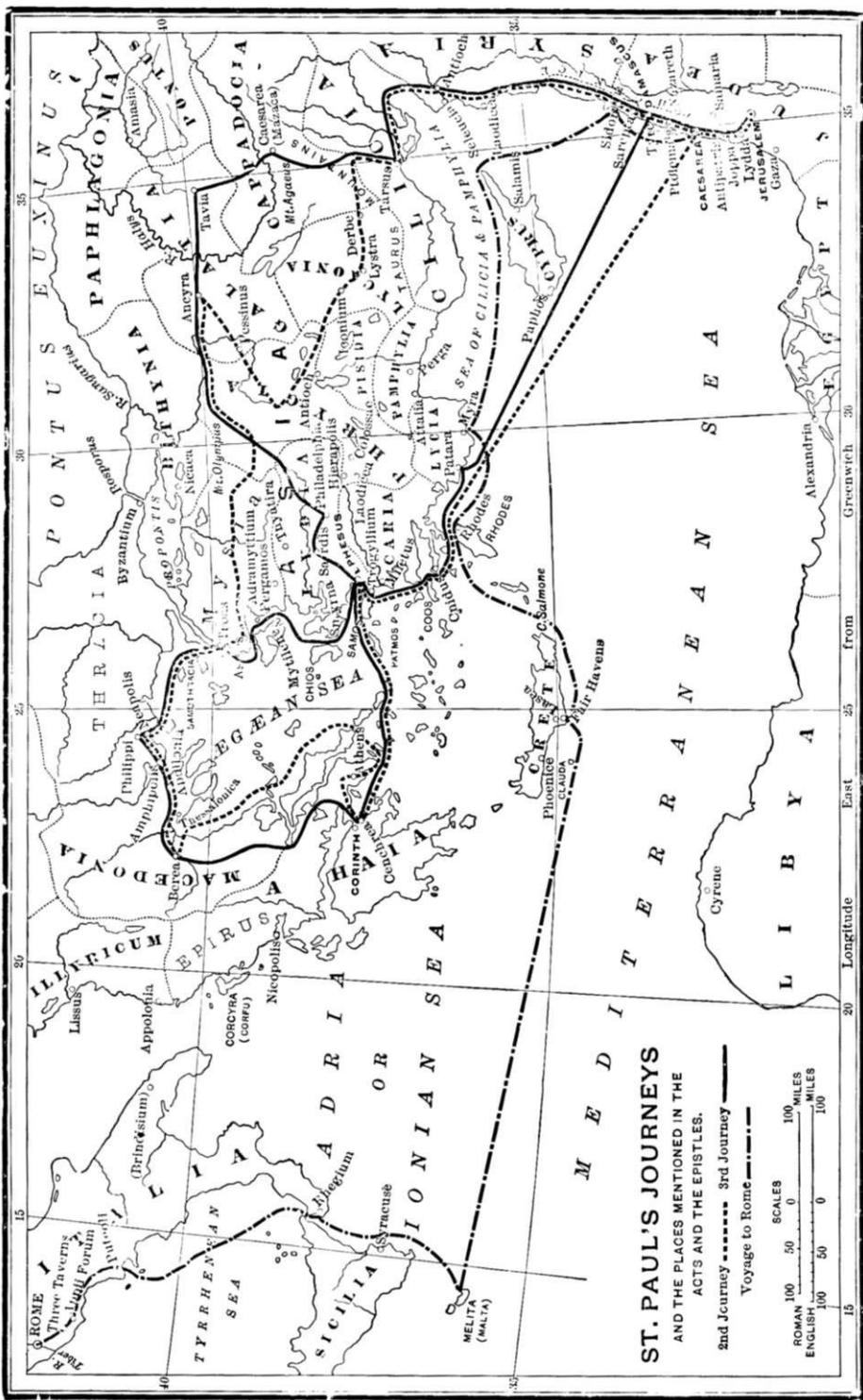
Visions Entitle One to Glory

Can you show that Paul was talking about  
 himself as the one who had this vision?

Did Paul admit that a man who had seen  
 such visions had a right to glory?  
 Why did he refuse to speak of himself di-  
 rectly as having such experience?

A Messenger of Satan to Buffet Him

What other Biblical characters had ex-  
 traordinary experiences?  
 In what ways are Paul's experiences su-  
 perior to them?  
 Of what was Paul in danger on account  
 of these experiences?  
 What was done for him to keep him from  
 being proud?  
 What do you know about the thorn in the  
 flesh?  
 How many times did Paul pray the Lord  
 to remove it?  
 To whom were these prayers offered?  
 What does this teach us about Jesus?  
 What was the Lord's answer to Paul's  
 prayer?  
 What is meant by the Lord's power being  
 made perfect in weakness?  
 What do you know of Paul's change of  
 attitude when he learned that the Lord  
 did not will to remove the thorn?  
 When are we strongest for the Lord?  
 What is there of interest in lessons to  
 learn?



### ST. PAUL'S JOURNEYS

AND THE PLACES MENTIONED IN THE ACTS AND THE EPISTLES.

2nd Journey ----- 3rd Journey .....  
 Voyage to Rome - - - - -



Longitude East from Greenwich 20 25 30 35

## SECOND QUARTER

### PAUL AND HIS PRISON EPISTLES

AIM.—*To learn the lessons of faith and devotion, sacrifice and discipline, determination and courage imbedded in the epistles Paul wrote while a prisoner in Rome.*

#### Lesson I—April 1, 1956

### PAUL, AN AMBASSADOR IN CHAINS

#### Lesson Text

Eph. 6: 18-20; Phil. 1: 12-14; Col. 4: 7-9, 13

18 With all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints,

19 And on my behalf, that utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,

20 For which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak,

12 Now I would have you know, brethren, that the things which *happened* unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel;

13 So that my bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole praetorian guard, and to all the rest;

14 And that most of the brethren

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content."* (Phil. 4: lib.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Cor. 11: 16-33.

in the Lord, being confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear.

7 All my affairs shall Tych'-i-cus make known unto you, the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord:

3 Whom I have sent unto you for this very purpose, that ye may know our state, and that he may comfort your hearts;

9 Together with O-nes'-i-mus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things that *are done* here.

13 The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you.

#### Daily Bible Readings

March 26.	M.....	A Faithful Ambassador (Obad. 1: 1-21)
March 27.	T....	Ambassadors from the King of Egypt (2 Chron. 35: 16-27)
March 28.	W.....	Jehovah's Ambassador (Prov. 13: 16-20)
March 29.	T.....	An Ambassador to the Nations (Jer. 49: 14-22)
March 30.	F.....	Rebellion Against Ambassadors (Ezek. 17: 15-21)
March 31.	S.....	Ambassadors of Peace Weep (Isa. 33: 1-12)
April 1.	S.....	Apostles, Ambassadors of Christ (2 Cor. 5: 18-21)

TIME.—A.D. 62.

PLACE.—Rome.

PERSONS.—Paul and the churches at Ephesus and Philippi.

#### Golden Text Explained

1. Contentedness under changing circumstances, (a) Paul's unpleasant circumstances. For many years Paul had been free to come and go when he pleased, but at the time of the writing of our text he was a prisoner

in Rome. He speaks of himself as "the prisoner in the Lord" (Eph. 4: 1); as "an ambassador in chains" (Eph. 6: 20); and that "my bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole praetorian guard" (Phil. 1:

13). Being thus imprisoned and chained to a soldier continually would be sufficient provocation to cause the average person to become impatient and indulge in considerable murmuring and complaining. But the apostle Paul was able to endure his imprisonment without any murmur or complaint, (b) Disinterest versus discontentedness. Paul was not disinterested in his condition, but he had learned to be content. Some do not have sufficient interest in their environment or circumstances to care what happens to them, but Paul was not of this type. Though interested in his own welfare and in his ability and opportunities to preach the gospel, he had learned to be content under the providence of God. (c) Contentedness versus satisfaction. Webster says, "To be content is to bring to the point where one is not disquieted or disturbed by desire, even though not every wish is gratified; to satisfy is to appease fully one's desires." Paul could not say that he was satisfied with his circumstances, but he could say that he was content under these unpleasant circumstances.

2. Contentedness can be learned, (a) Proper valuation of the temporal and the spiritual. People who put the supreme value on things temporal and worldly could never learn to be content while suffering as unjustly as Paul suffered. Paul did not spend his time and energy cursing the government for its injustice, but rather he turned his attention to the things of a spiritual nature and preached the gospel to all who would listen and wrote letters to the churches which he had established in an effort to encourage them and lead them into greater usefulness in the Lord's service. (b) Curbing one's desires. Those who have little or no control over their desires for worldly things would find it impossible to be content under such cir-

cumstances as Paul was in while writing this text. We must learn to curb our desires, control them so as to maintain our patience and peace of mind. (c) What we have is more than we brought here or deserve. Paul said, "But godliness with contentment is great gain: for we brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out; but having food and covering we shall be therewith content." (1 Tim. 6: 6-8.) And when people lack the faith and humility to realize that their circumstances in the providence of God are better than they deserve, they are likely to be impatient.

3. Blessings of contentedness. (a) Peace of mind. When people are discontented and impatient, they can have no peace of mind. Only by realizing that we are in the hands of God and that our circumstances and conditions are determined by his good providence can we really have that peace of mind that should characterize the children of God. (b) Guards from danger. After saying that we should be content with what we have, Paul says, "But they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1 Tim. 6: 9, 10.) Being content with what we have will guard us from such dangers. (c) Enables one to serve God better. Certainly those who have peace of mind are in better condition to serve and worship God than those who are impatient and fretting and chafing under unpleasant circumstances and conditions. So if we wish to give God the best service possible, we should cultivate the quality of contentment.

### Introduction

Paul tells us that he was in prisons "more abundantly" than others of his day. (2 Cor. 11: 53.) He suffered imprisonment for the sake of the gospel and not because of his evil doings, and as such could rejoice in the promise that "the Spirit of God resteth upon you." (1 Pet. 4: 14-16.)

This is the type of imprisonment to which Jesus referred in Matt. 25: 36, 43. We have no complete record of Paul's imprisonments: the first is mentioned in Acts 16: 19ff. There we are told that Paul and Silas were imprisoned in Philippi. This imprisonment did not last long, being ter-

minated by an earthquake and the conversion of the jailer. The next imprisonment of which we have a record was in Jerusalem. There, while worshipping in the temple, Paul was taken by a mob and would have been murdered had it not been for Lysias, the Roman captain, and his soldiers rescuing him. They kept him a prisoner in order to protect him from the people. Felix, the governor, heard Paul a number of times hoping that Paul would bribe him to gain his release (Acts 24: 26), but refusing to buy his liberty, Paul spent two years in jail in Caesarea, whither he had been transported from Jerusalem for his own protection. Being replaced by Festus, Felix, in order to gain favor of the Jews, left Paul in bonds. Festus was not long in office when he was about to deliver

Paul into the hands of the Jews and, to prevent this, Paul appealed unto Caesar. He was then sent to Rome, where he spent another two years in prison, this time being allowed to dwell in his own hired house, though chained to a soldier. (Acts 28: 30.) It was during this latter imprisonment that Paul wrote his prison epistles: Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, and Philippians, perhaps in this order. He seems to have been released from this first imprisonment and went into Spain. Returning through the Mediterranean Sea, he wrote First Timothy and Titus in the summer and autumn of A.D. 67. Then in the spring of A.D. 68, he was imprisoned again in Rome where he wrote Second Timothy and then was beheaded, perhaps in May or June of that same year.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. The Prayerful Ambassador (Eph. 6: 18-20)

*With all prayer and supplication.* In the preceding verses, Paul has described the Christian's armor with which we are to meet the spiritual foes which are said to be the principalities, powers, world rulers of this darkness, and spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places. Barnes suggests that the expression "all prayer" suggests or means all kinds of prayer, such as "prayer in the closet, the family, the social meeting, the great assembly; prayer at the usual hours, prayer when we are specially tempted, and when we feel just like praying; prayer in the form of supplication for ourselves, and in the form of intercession for others."

*Praying at all seasons in the Spirit.* This suggests that there is no certain or special time for prayer, but that we should be prayerful at all times. And praying "in the Spirit" may mean that we are to pray in harmony with the teachings of the Spirit, or that our prayer is to be sincere, to come from the heart.

*Watching thereunto in all perseverance.* Jesus taught his disciples to watch as well as pray. (Mark 13: 33.) In connection with our prayers we are to be watchful (a) lest we forget or neglect to pray; (b) lest we lose our spirituality and drift into formality in our prayers; (c) we are

to watch for opportunities to pray; (d) we are to watch in order that we may escape or overcome the hindrances to prayer; (e) we may also watch for the answers to our prayer. There are many reasons why we ought to pray, but we suggest only a few. (a) Satan is set to destroy all of us, and we are to pray for deliverance from him. (Matt. 6: 13.) (b) Praying for others helps us to love others. No one can continue in earnest prayer in behalf of a person without growing to love that person and be interested deeply in his welfare. (c) We do ourselves and others a favor when we engage in prayer in their behalf. (d) We please God when we pray. We are commanded to pray, to pray without ceasing, to continue steadfastly in prayer, and so when we follow Paul's instruction here to pray for all the saints we are obeying a commandment of the Lord.

*And on my behalf.* If the great apostle Paul felt the need of the prayers of others in his behalf, certainly we should be keenly aware of our need of the prayers of others. It would be good for us to have a list of people for whom we pray, and it would be good that our names should be on the prayer list of others. And we would be encouraged to know that others are praying for us daily.

*That utterance may be given unto me.* Paul was anxious that his imprisonment and his suffering should

not cause him to weaken in his determination to preach the truth plainly and boldly. He felt the need of the strength and courage that would come from and in answer to the prayers of others. Surely if the great and fearless apostle felt the need of the prayers of others that his preaching might be just what it ought to be, we preachers of today certainly need the prayers of others, and we need to be much in prayer in our own behalf that we may preach in such way as will please the Lord and as will save souls. Why should Paul need the prayers of others? (a) Lest he should lose his old zeal and fervor with which he was accustomed to preach, (b) Lest he should leave out those vital, saving truths which caused him to be in prison. There was the tendency always and the temptation to make his message appeal to his hearers, and since they hated certain truths which Paul preached, there was the temptation to tone these down or to leave them out. (c) Lest he neglect and fail to use every opportunity that presented itself.

*For which I am an ambassador in chains.* An ambassador is an authoritative representative sent by one government to another. The greatest insult which a government can show to another is to imprison its ambassador. Paul was heaven's representative or ambassador bringing a message of salvation and was imprisoned by the very people whom he proposed to save by the preaching of that message. He was careful and prayerful that his conduct and his preaching should be in harmony with his high calling and position.

## II. The Cheerful Ambassador (Phil. 1: 12-15)

*Now I would have you know.* Paul speaks of his personal condition and circumstances. He wishes the brethren to know that his imprisonment has fallen out unto the progress of the gospel, rather than to the hindrance of the same. It would be expected that a preacher would be much hindered in his work by imprisonment, and Paul was anxious that his friends in Philippi should know that he had many opportunities to preach the gospel in spite of his imprisonment; and further that by this imprisonment a knowledge of

the gospel had gone into hearts where it could never have gone had he not been imprisoned. We often fret about many things which we think are hindrances to the gospel when, if we could see them as God sees them, we would understand they are for the progress and not the hindrance of the gospel.

*My bonds became manifest in Christ.* This means that the guard and all in authority became aware of the fact that Paul was imprisoned, not because of any violation of the law or because of any meanness of character, but simply because he was a Christian, a follower of Christ. Paul's conduct during the storm and on the island of Melita (Acts 28:1-17), must have convinced the centurion in charge that Paul was more than an ordinary man, and this centurion must have conveyed this information to those in authority at Rome. This undoubtedly gave Paul a favorable introduction and reception in the prison. And this introduction by the centurion may have contributed to the fact that Paul's bonds became manifest throughout the praetorian guard.

*Throughout the whole praetorian guard.* The word "praetorian" is interesting. It is used (a) of the palace of Herod at Jerusalem. (Matt. 27: 27; Mark 15: 16.) (b) It is used of Herod's palace in Caesarea. When Paul was conveyed from Jerusalem to Caesarea for his own safety, we are told that he was kept "in his palace," but the Greek word is praetorian instead of palace, (c) It is used of the palace of Nero in Rome. It is generally believed that the guards in this palace took turns guarding Paul, and so each one in his turn became an audience to whom Paul preached the gospel. In this way, they not only learned the reason why Paul was suffering imprisonment, but they heard the gospel preached. And undoubtedly some of them were converted, for when Paul wrote the church at Philippi he said, "all the saints salute you, especially they that are of Caesar's household." (Phil. 4: 22.)

*Most of the brethren in the Lord.* Paul says that brethren in the Lord, being confident through his bonds, were more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear, (a) They may have been led to an in-

creased sense of responsibility by Paul's imprisonment. Since Paul, a great champion of the gospel, had been imprisoned, they would realize that they must do more to make up for his absence in the line of duty, (b) Many of the brethren, perhaps all that preached, would visit Paul in his prison house and would seek encouragement from him to preach the gospel, (c) They were urged on by the example of Paul. If Paul could suffer as he was then suffering for the sake of the gospel, they felt that they should be willing to suffer. Armed with this resolve to suffer as Paul suffered, they would be more zealous and energetic in the preaching of the gospel than they would have been had it not been for the encouragement they received from the example of Paul.

### III. The Thoughtful Ambassador

(Col. 4: 7-9, 18)

*All my affairs shall Tychicus make know unto you.* Paul is high in his praise of Tychicus as "the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord." He was a resident of Asia, perhaps of the city of Ephesus, and undoubtedly well known to the brethren at Colossae. He was with Paul in Troas (Acts 20: 4), and may have been one of those messengers of the churches who accompanied Paul as he took the contribution from Asia to the poor saints in Judea. (1 Cor. 16: 3, 4.) He accompanied Paul part of the time between the writing of the first and second letters to Timothy, for Paul speaks of sending Tychicus to Ephesus (2 Tim. 4: 12), and he promises also to send either Artemas or Tychicus to Titus on the island of Crete (Tit. 3: 12).

*Whom I have sent unto you for this very purpose.* The purpose was that the brethren at Colossae might know Paul's state and their hearts might be comforted by this knowledge. This was a thoughtful thing on the part of Paul. His friends had heard of his imprisonment; they would wonder why he was in prison, and Paul was anxious that they might know the reason for his imprisonment. They would also be anxious about his welfare, both physically and spiritually, and Paul was anxious to advise them that they might be comforted with reference to

his welfare. In this his thoughtfulness for his friends is clearly manifested.

*With Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother.* This Onesimus was the slave of Philemon, who contacted Paul in his prison at Rome and was perhaps converted by him and was sent by Paul back to his master.

*The faithful and beloved brother.* Paul no longer speaks of Onesimus as a slave, but as a faithful and beloved brother. For Paul says, "who is one of you." This may mean that he was a citizen of Colossae, or that he was, on account of his conversion, to be accepted as a member of the church, one of the brethren in spite of his enslavement in days past, or of his mistake in running away from his master.

*They shall make known unto you all things.* Paul charged Tychicus and Onesimus with the responsibility of making known to the brethren at Colossae everything which they needed to know with reference to his state, both physical and spiritual.

*The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand.* This is a common expression in the epistles of Paul. (2 Thess. 3: 17, 18; 1 Cor. 16: 21-24; Gal. 6: 11-18.) Paul dictated his letter to a scribe or amanuensis, but in the closing lines it was his practice to take hold of the pen himself and write the salutation and sometimes the personal references. This would serve to indicate his personal interest in those to whom the letter was addressed, and it might serve to identify him as the author of the letter since they would undoubtedly recognize his handwriting.

*Remember my bonds.* (a) Paul wished them to remember his bonds that they, like the brethren in Rome, might be encouraged to follow his example and might be excited by this example to greater exertion in the preaching of the gospel. (b) He wished them to remember his bonds in their prayers that they might pray as he requested of the Ephesians that he might preach the gospel plainly and boldly while in prison. And undoubtedly he wished that the brethren would pray for his release from prison as soon as the will of the Lord should so dictate. (c) He wished them to remember his bonds in the way of sympathy. No man can suffer

as Paul was then suffering without desiring the sympathy of his brethren and especially those whom he holds dear. He had been with the brethren at Ephesus and Colossae and had learned to love them, many of them his own children in the gospel. And

now that he is suffering imprisonment, he begs of them to remember him by being sympathetic towards him and praying for him and writing to him and coming to see him when they had opportunity.

### Lessons to Learn

1. None of us ever gets too big or important to need prayer. We need to pray ourselves, and we need the prayers of others. We ought to be diligent in our own prayers, and we ought continually to ask others to pray in our behalf.

2. Cheerfulness under adverse circumstances is an index to character. Little souls fret and worry and murmur and complain when suffering adversities, but those who can be cheerful in spite of these circumstances indicate a growth and de-

velopment and maturity of soul which are not known to the little souls who murmur and complain.

3. Being thoughtful of the welfare of others costs us but little and means so much to others that we ought to be willing to give some thought and concern for their welfare. Furthermore, it is proof of one's unselfishness. One cannot be unselfish without thinking of others and doing for others. Paul indicates his unselfishness here by his thoughtfulness for the welfare of his friends.

### 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

In what unpleasant circumstance was Paul when he wrote our text?  
Can you distinguish between disinterest and discontentedness?  
What is the difference between contentedness and satisfaction?  
Name and discuss three things which help us to learn the lesson of contentedness.  
Name and discuss three blessings of contentedness.

#### Introduction

What did Paul say about his prison record?  
Did Jesus pronounce a blessing upon those who were in prison for their misdeeds or for the sake of the gospel?  
Can you relate Paul's prison experiences as revealed in Acts of Apostles?  
What letters did Paul write while in prison at Rome?  
What do you know of Paul's release from his first imprisonment and the letters which he wrote during that release?  
What was Paul's last letter, and when did he suffer martyrdom?

#### The Prayerful Ambassador

What enemies make it necessary for the Christian to wear an armor?  
What is meant by "all prayer"?  
What is meant by praying at all seasons?  
Name and discuss the five ideas sug-

gested in connection with being watchful in prayer.

Discuss the four reasons given as to why we should pray.

Give and discuss three reasons why Paul asked people to pray for him.

What insult was offered to God in the imprisonment of Paul?

#### The Cheerful Ambassador

How did Paul's imprisonment help in the furtherance of the gospel?

Can you suggest a reason why Paul was given courteous treatment by the authorities at Rome?

What was the praetorian guard?

In what way is the word "praetorian" used in the scriptures?

What proof do we have that some of the praetorian guard were converted by Paul?

How did Paul's imprisonment affect the brethren?

#### The Thoughtful Ambassador

Who was to carry the news of Paul's condition to the Colossians?

What do you know of the activities of this fellow-laborer of Paul's?

In what way did Paul show his thoughtfulness for the brethren at Colossae?

What slave is mentioned in our lesson, and what do you know of him?

In what way did Paul show a personal interest in the people to whom he addressed his letter?

In what way and for what reason did Paul wish for the brethren to remember his bonds?

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

Lesson II—April 8, 1956

PAUL, AN APOSTLE TO THE GENTILES

Lesson Text

Eph. 3: 1-12

1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Je'-sus in behalf of you Gen'-tles,—

2 If so be that ye have heard of the dispensation of that grace of God which was given me to you-ward;

3 How that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote before in few words,

4 Whereby, when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ;

5 Which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;

6 To wit, that the Gen'-tles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Je'-sus through the gospel,

7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of that grace of God which was given me according to the working of his power.

8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach unto the Gen'-tles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

9 And to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which for ages hath been hid in God who created all things;

10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God,

11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Je'-sus our Lord:

12 In whom we have boldness and access in confidence through our faith in him.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"But I speak to you that are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I glorify my ministry."* (Rom. 11: 13.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Eph. 2: 11-22.

Daily Bible Readings

April 2.	M.	.....	The Original Twelve (Matt. 10: 1-4)
April 3.	T.	.....	Limited Commission (Matt. 10: 5-15)
April 4.	W.	.....	Great Commission (Matt. 28: 18-20; Mark 16: 15, 16)
April 5.	T.	.....	Qualifications of an Apostle (Acts 1: 15-26)
April 6.	F.	.....	Signs of an Apostle (2 Cor. 12: 11-13)
April 7.	S.	.....	Paul, an Apostle "untimely born." (1 Cor. 15: 1-11)
April 8.	S.	.....	Paul's Call to the Apostleship (Acts 9: 1-22)

TIME.—A.D. 62.

PLACE.—Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints at Ephesus.

Golden Text Explained

1. Paul called to preach to Gentiles.  
 (a) Paul's apostleship to the Gentiles was according to plan. Paul tells us that it was good pleasure of God to separate him even from birth, and that God called him through grace "to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles." (Gal. 1: 16.) Thus we see that it was a part of God's plan even before the birth of Paul for him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.  
 (b) Paul was called by a special per-

sonal appearance of Jesus Christ. "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; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee." (Acts 26: 16, 17.) In order to be an apostle, there were certain conditions which one had to meet, and so we read, "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.) From these passages we learn that Jesus made a special, personal appearance to Saul of Tarsus as he was on the road to Damascus that Paul might see the risen Lord, that he might hear a voice from his mouth and thus be qualified to be a witness of his resurrection. There are other statements concerning his mission to the Gentiles. The Lord appeared unto him while he was at Jerusalem and said, "For I will send thee forth far hence unto the Gentiles." (Acts 22: 21.) And at the time of his conversion, the Lord told Ananias that Paul was a "chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel." (Acts 9: 15.)

2. Paul's apostleship recognized, (a) Paul wins a point. When Paul's apostleship and the doctrine that he preached were called in question by his enemies in Antioch, he agreed to go to Jerusalem to lay the matter before the other apostles and the elders of the church. Paul says that he went up by revelation. (Gal. 2: 2.) And while there, he laid his gospel which he preached to the Gentiles before the other apostles and the elders of the church, and the record says, "When they saw that I had been intrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter with the gospel of the circumcision." (Gal. 2: 7.) From this we learn that Paul was able to prove to the other apostles and the elders of the church that he had been entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision. This simply means that God

had called and chosen him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles even as Peter was entrusted with the responsibility of preaching the gospel especially to Jews, (b) The right hand of fellowship. Paul says that "when they perceived the grace that was given unto me, James and Cephas and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go unto the Gentiles and they unto circumcision." (Gal. 2: 9.) (c) Gentiles' debt of gratitude. Gentiles owe a lot to Paul for their freedom from Jewish ceremonies. A Jewish element in the church tried to force circumcision and other Jewish ceremonies on the Gentiles in the church, but Paul would not allow this effort to succeed, even though he had an argument with Peter. (Gal. 2: 11ff.)

3. Purpose of preaching to the Gentiles, (a) When Jesus appeared to Paul, he told him that he would send him to the Gentiles "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." (Acts 26: 18.) (b) Again we learn that Paul says he preached to the Gentiles "if by any means I may provoke to jealousy them that are my flesh, and may serve some of them." (Rom. 11: 14.) (c) Again, we find Paul saying that, because of the grace of God given to him that he should be a minister of Christ unto the Gentiles, he was ministering the gospel of God "that the offering up of the Gentiles might be made acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit." (Rom. 15: 16.)

### Introduction

Though Paul was a special apostle unto the Gentiles, he still followed the usual order of preaching to the Jews first in each city where he went. For instance, on his first missionary journey when he arrived in Antioch of Pisidia, he went into the synagogue and, being invited to speak, he preached them a sermon. Then on the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitude, they were filled

with jealousy and contradicted the things Paul preached, and went so far as to blaspheme. And then Paul said, "It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." (Acts 13: 46.) A similar thing happened in Rome when Paul was taken there as prisoner. A number of the elders of the Jews came to visit with him and asked that a day

be appointed when they could hear him testify concerning the kingdom of God. And the record says that, when Paul had spoken to them from the law of Moses and the prophets from morning till evening, some of them believed and some disbelieved. And then Paul, speaking to the disbelievers, said, "Be it known therefore unto you, that this salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles; they will also hear." (Acts 28: 28.) The riot of the silversmiths led by Demetrius in Ephesus is a testimony to the success of Paul's work in preaching to the Gentiles. The Jews, of course, were not idolaters, and con-

version of Jews to Christianity would not affect the sale of the shrines of the goddess Diana. But we learn from the record, in Acts 19, that Paul was so successful in turning people away from idolatry that the silversmiths persecuted him. Since the Jews were not idolaters and yet Paul turned so many people from idolatry that he won the enmity of the silversmiths, we conclude that the people whom he turned from idolatry were Gentiles. Consequently, this is a testimony to the success of Paul's preaching to the Gentiles in Ephesus.

## Exposition of the Text

### I. A Prisoner in Behalf of Gentiles

(Eph. 3: 1-4)

*The prisoner of Christ Jesus.* Paul says that he was a prisoner of Christ in behalf of the Gentiles. By reading Eph. 2: 11-21, the student will see why Paul says he was a prisoner in behalf of the Gentiles. He was maintaining the rights and privileges of the Gentiles, uncircumcised, in the church of the Lord. Paul contrasts what they were before the gospel was preached to them with what they now are since they have obeyed the gospel. Before the gospel was preached, they were separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now he says that they are reconciled unto God, made high in the blood of Christ, and that they are no more strangers and sojourners but are fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God and are built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone.

*Dispensation of that grace of God.* The word dispensation means "the management of household affairs." Then it means "stewardship or administration; a dispensation or arrangement of things, a scheme or plan." (Barnes) Paul simply means to say that by the grace of God he had been given the responsibility and the privilege of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, that in God's plan or management of his affairs this particular task had been given to the apostle Paul.

*That by revelation was made known unto me the mystery.* Paul often affirmed that the gospel which he preached was not given him by any man, nor did he learn it, but it came to him through revelation of Jesus Christ. (Gal. 1: 11, 12.) The word mystery does not mean something which is beyond the comprehension of mortal minds, but rather some truth or fact or principle which has not been hitherto revealed. A thing which can be learned by study or human ingenuity is not a mystery. That which has to be revealed is a mystery. But after the matter has been revealed, it may be a very simple and easily understood principle or fact.

*As I wrote before in few words.* Whether this statement refers to a previous letter or to some previous statement in this letter has given commentators considerable trouble. But since we do not have any other intimation of a previous letter, and since sufficient has been said on this subject in the two previous chapters, we conclude that reference is made to what is contained in this letter. The student will do well to read Eph. 1: 9-11 and 2: 11-21, as that to which Paul made reference in this statement. Next, the statement, "when ye read," implies that the material to which he refers has not yet been read by the Ephesian church. This almost certainly proves that Paul is referring to something which he has written in the preceding part of this epistle.

*Ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ.* Here the apostle plainly says that, by reading

his writing, the church composed of both the learned and the unlearned can perceive his understanding in these affairs. Our Roman Catholic friends contend that the average reader among the common people cannot understand the scriptures when he reads them, and that it is dangerous for common people to read the scriptures. Hence, they discourage the reading of the Bible by the common people. But Paul affirms that, when the church at Ephesus should read the epistle he was writing, they would perceive his understanding in the mystery of Christ.

## II. Mystery of Christ Revealed (Eph. 3: 5-9)

*Which in other generations was not made known.* Whatever this mystery of Christ is, Paul affirms that it had not previously been revealed as fully as it has now been revealed through his apostles and prophets. He does not necessarily affirm that this mystery had never been revealed before this particular letter was written. Undoubtedly Paul had been preaching this mystery for many years. Nor does Paul affirm that the mystery was revealed to him only, or to him as the first one to receive it. He says that it has now been made known through his apostles and prophets. The Mormon idea that the gospel in all its fullness was preached to Adam and to all the patriarchs down through the ages receives its death blow here. Paul says the gospel of Jesus Christ was not made known in generations past as it is now revealed through the apostles and prophets in this Christian dispensation. Peter says that the prophets of old spoke of these matters, but knew that they did not pertain unto them as they pertain unto us who now live in the gospel dispensation. (1 Pet. 1: 10-12.)

*In the Spirit.* This expression means as the Spirit moves and directs. Jesus said that David, speaking in the Spirit, said certain things. (Mark 12: 36.) And Paul speaks of people not being able to call Jesus anathema when they speak in the Spirit. (1 Cor. 12: 3.) So here we have Paul affirming that the apostles and prophets spoke by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

*That the Gentiles are fellow-heirs.*

There are three parts to this mystery. (a) The Gentiles are fellow heirs; (b) the Gentiles are fellow members of the body, the church; (c) and they are fellow partakers of the promise in Christ through the gospel. This is the very thing that Paul had written in 2: 11-21. This is the truth which the majority of Jews refused to accept, and this is the special message which God in his grace called and sent Paul to preach to the Gentiles. And for preaching this message Paul was put in prison, so he styles himself a prisoner of Christ Jesus in behalf of the Gentiles.

*Fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.* The promise to which reference is made is the promise made to Abraham that in his seed all families of the earth should be blessed. This term "all families" certainly includes the Gentiles as well as the Jews. The Jews expected the Gentiles to be partakers of the promise, but only after they had submitted to circumcision, thus receiving those blessings indirectly through the Jews. But Paul contends that they receive these blessings directly instead of indirectly, that the Gentiles are included in the promise, and that they are fellow heirs with Jews through the gospel of Christ.

*Whereof I was made a minister.* Paul affirms that he was made a minister or a servant of God in making known this mystery in which the Gentiles are proclaimed fellow heirs of the promise.

*Which was given me according to the working of his power.* This sentence is admittedly difficult. Commentators differ widely as to its meaning. The best statement I know is as follows. "As the former sentence affirmed the gift of the grace, this one states the manner of the bestowal. The standard or proportion of the giving was the efficiency, the efficacious working of God's own power. The change in Paul when God made him an apostle of Christ to the Gentiles was so great that he saw in it nothing less than the result of the divine omnipotence." (The Expositor's Greek Testament.)

*Unto me . . . was this grace given.* Paul states two reasons why this grace was manifested toward him. (a) To preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; (b) and

to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which for ages has been hid in God, who created all things. Notice how Paul describes the message which he has to deliver: (a) the mystery of Christ; (b) the gospel of Christ; and (c) the unsearchable riches of Christ. All three of these refer to the same message. It is also interesting to see his humility expressed here in these words, "who am less than the least of all saints," and a similar statement in 1 Cor. 15: 9, where he said he was the least of the apostles. And it is interesting to compare these with his statement made in 2 Cor. 12: 11, where he says, "For in nothing was I behind the very chiefest apostles."

### III. Purpose of Paul's Preaching

(Eph. 3: 10-12)

*To the intent that now unto the principalities.* This expresses the purpose for which Paul was made a minister and for which he was preaching to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. And the purpose is stated in these words, "that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God."

(a) This manifold wisdom of God is to be made known; (b) the manifold wisdom of God is to be made known unto principalities and powers; (c) these principalities and powers are in the heavenly places; (d) this wisdom of God is to be made known to the principalities and powers through the church. This passage is often used to prove that it is the business of the church to preach the gospel to the lost. But, while it is the duty of the church to preach the gospel to the lost, that thought is not contained at all in this verse. Paul says that the manifold wisdom of God is to be made known unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. Surely no one will say that lost men and women are the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. The expression, "might be made known through the church," does not mean that the church is obligated to make something known to somebody but rather the thought is that God is using the preaching of the gospel and the establishment of the church to display his wisdom before the principalities

and powers in the heavenly places so they might gain greater and more perfect conception of his wisdom and power and glory.

*The manifold wisdom of God.* "In the redemption of the church there is not merely one form or one phase of wisdom. It is wisdom ever varying ever beautiful. There was wisdom manifested when the plan was formed; wisdom in the selection of the Redeemer; wisdom in the incarnation; wisdom in the atonement; wisdom in the means of renewing the heart, and sanctifying the soul; wisdom in the various dispensations by which the church is sanctified, guided, and brought to glory. The wisdom thus shown is like the ever-varying beauty of changing clouds, when the sun is reflected on them at evening." (Barnes.)

*According to the eternal purpose.* Paul says that his gospel and the preaching of that gospel to the Gentiles is according to an eternal purpose which the Father purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. In verse 5, we learn that the things Paul preached were not made known in former generations as they are now revealed through inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but there is no indication in that verse of how long before the revelation of these things they existed in the purpose of God. But in verse 11, we are told that these things are preached as a part of an eternal purpose which the Father had with reference to his Son, Jesus Christ. From this we conclude that the church is a part of God's eternal purpose. It was not an afterthought, not something to serve his purpose because the Jews rejected him and made it impossible for him to establish an earthly kingdom on this earth.

*In whom we have boldness and access.* Paul asserts that it is in Christ Jesus we have such boldness of speech and of action, and that it is through Jesus Christ that we have access unto God, and that this access is gained through our faith in him. This boldness and this access unto God are enjoyed by those only who are in Christ, for Paul says it is *in Christ* we have our boldness and access. "Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need." (Heb. 4: 16.)

### Lessons to Learn

1. We should appreciate the courage and the self-sacrifice of Paul in suffering to reveal the mystery of Christ and to defend the rights of Gentiles. The Gentile world owes much to the apostle Paul for his steadfast determination to keep the church free from Jewish ceremonialism.

2. We are partakers of the promise of salvation through the gospel. This is a wonderful promise with wonder-

ful provisions and on such easy terms extended in love and mercy too wonderful for our comprehension.

3. We are wonderfully blessed in being members of the church of which prophets of old got only dim glimpses, which angels desired to know more about, and which is near the climax of God's eternal purpose, the accomplishment of which necessitated the death of the sinless Son of God.

### 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 evidence do we have that Paul's call to preach was according to God's plan?

What does Paul say of his appointment to be a minister and a witness of Jesus?

What conditions did one have to meet to be an apostle of Jesus Christ?

What evidence do we have that Paul was a special apostle unto the Gentiles?

How and where did the original apostles indicate their acceptance of Paul?

For what are the Gentiles especially indebted to Paul?

State and discuss three purposes for Paul's preaching to the Gentiles.

#### Introduction

Did Paul preach to others than the Gentiles?

What was the usual attitude of the Jews toward Paul's preaching?

Tell of Paul's experience with the Jews in Rome.

Relate Paul's experience with the silversmiths in Ephesus.

What evidence do we have of Paul's success among Gentiles in Ephesus?

#### A Prisoner in Behalf of Gentiles

Why did Paul call himself a prisoner in behalf of Gentiles?

Contrast the condition of Gentiles before gospel obedience with their condition afterwards.

What is the meaning of the word "dispensation" in our text?

What is the meaning of "mystery"?

What prior mention had Paul made of the mystery in this letter?

What evidence do we have in this letter that members of the church generally can understand the writings of the apostles?

#### Mystery of Christ Revealed

Was this mystery mentioned in the Old Testament?

How does the mention of this mystery in the New Testament differ from its mention in the Old Testament?

What is meant by "speaking in the Spirit"?

Does Paul claim to be the only one to whom this mystery was revealed?

Name and discuss the three parts of this mystery revealed to apostles and prophets.

What two reasons does Paul give why the grace of God was manifested toward him?

By what term does Paul describe the message he delivers?

#### Purpose of Paul's Preaching

To whom was the manifold wisdom of God to be made known?

What is said of the location of these principalities and powers?

Through what institution was the wisdom of God to be made known to these principalities and powers?

In what respect is God's wisdom manifold?

How does Paul describe the purpose of God with reference to the church?

In what relationship do we have boldness and access in our approach to God?

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

## Lesson III—April 15, 1956

### PAUL ADMONISHES THE EPHESIANS

#### Lesson Text

Eph. 5: 1-12

1 Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children;

2 And walk in love, even as Christ also loved you, and gave himself up

for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odor of a sweet smell.

3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not even

be named among you, as becometh saints;

4 Nor filthiness, nor foolish talking, or jesting, which are not befitting: but rather giving of thanks.

5 For this ye know of a surety, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

6 Let no man deceive you with empty words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience.

7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them;

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might." (Eph. 6: 10.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Eph. 4: 17-32.

### Daily Bible Readings

April 9.	M	To Imitate Paul as he Imitated Christ (1 Cor. 11: 1-3)
April 10.	T	Walk not After the Flesh (Gal. 5: 1-15)
April 11.	W	Works of the Flesh (Gal. 5: 16-21)
April 12.	T	Fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5: 22-26)
April 13.	F	Wrath of God on the Wicked (Col. 3: 5-11)
April 14.	S	No fellowship with Darkness (2 Cor. 6: 14-18)
April 15.	S	Description of Wicked Men (Rom. 1: 28-32)

TIME.—A.D. 62.

PLACE.—Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints at Ephesus.

### Golden Text Explained

1. The need for strength, (a) We have strong enemies. Paul says that we wrestle "not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." (Eph. 6: 12.) From this verse we learn that our enemies are both many and strong. Satan has been in the business of tempting the human family for about six thousand years, and thus is experienced, and since he has more than human knowledge, he has considerable advantage over us. Hence, we need strength above that which we possess in our wisdom. But not only do we have these hosts of wicked spirits as our enemies, but we have the world with all of its tempting and seducing influences, and consequently need strength and wisdom to overcome these temptations. (b) We have great tasks to perform. The need of strength is emphasized not only in the enemies we have to meet,

8 For ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord: walk as children of light

9 (For the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth),

10 Proving what is well-pleasing unto the Lord;

11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them;

12 For the things which are done by them in secret it is a shame even to speak of.

but also in the tasks we have to perform. We have been given the business of perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (2 Cor. 7: 1b.) We have also been given the task of preaching the gospel to every creature under heaven. In the great commission, Jesus commanded his people to preach the gospel in all the world. This will take sacrifice, both in money and time, and so constitutes a great task for the people of God to perform and makes necessary the strength of which our text speaks. (c) The struggle against our enemies is long and continual. Man can exert considerable strength for a short while without a great deal of tax on his constitution, but to continue to exert unreasonable strength over a long period of time is very taxing. So we have great enemies to overcome; we have great tasks to perform; and these tasks are continuous, lasting as long as we live. This emphasizes the necessity for strength above that which we possess, and hence the

necessity to pray for the Lord to strengthen and encourage us to perform our duties.

2. How to cultivate strength, (a) Through the reading of scripture. Jesus says we are not to live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. (Matt. 4: 4.) And Peter tells us that as newborn babes we are to long for the spiritual milk which is without guile that we may grow thereby unto salvation. (1 Pet. 2: 2.) From this we learn that the word of God is the food upon which the soul grows, and as it grows it gains strength just as the physical body gains strength as it grows. So in order for us to cultivate this spiritual strength, we must have spiritual food which is the word of God. (b) We are to pray for strength. Paul prayed for the Ephesians that they might be "strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man." (Eph. 3: 16b.) When Paul prayed that the thorn in his flesh might be removed, the Lord did not remove the thorn, but he gave Paul the strength to bear up under the thorn. (2 Cor. 12: 8, 9.) (c) We are to exercise ourselves in godliness. Not only is it necessary that we take food that the physical may grow, but we must exercise. So in the spiritual realm spiritual food is not sufficient by itself, but we must have exercise that we may translate that spiritual food into spiritual strength and power. This godliness is not found in withdrawing from the world to the solitude of a monastery, but it is found by keeping ourselves from the evil that is in the world and which surrounds us in our daily ac-

tivities. We are not to tempt the Lord by unnecessarily exposing ourselves to temptation; neither are we to withdraw so far from the activities of everyday life that we not only can escape temptation, but that we cannot possibly be of any service to the world in which the Lord has willed that we should live.

3. Source of our strength, (a) It is granted of the Lord. Again, we refer to Paul's prayer for the Ephesians: "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man." (Eph. 3: 16.) From this we learn that strength to meet temptation is a gift from the Lord, (b) It is found in union with Christ. The apostle Paul said, "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me." (Phil. 4: 13.) It is in union with Christ that we have our strength. The man who stands alone will fail in his battle against sin, but the man who unites himself with Christ and makes the strength of the Lord available to him in times of temptation can certainly stand. (c) Christ's power is consistent with man's weakness. When the Lord had refused to remove the thorn in Paul's flesh and had promised him grace sufficient, Paul said, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." (2 Cor. 12: 9, 10.)

### Introduction

Paul admonished the church at Ephesus. All of us need to be admonished over and over again. The word admonish means "to warn of a fault; to reprove gently or kindly, but seriously; to exhort; also to put one in mind of something forgotten by way of a warning or exhortation." (Webster.) As long as any one of us is even liable to be at fault, he needs to be admonished, and most of us are actually guilty of wrongdoing. Consequently, we need to be re-

proved, and the definition of our word says that this reproof is to be gentle and kind, but that it is to be in a serious vein. Furthermore, as long as we are liable to forget our duty, we need to be admonished. And as long as there are dangers of which we ought to be warned, we will need admonition. From a study of this definition and from a study of our situation in life, we can easily see the need for continued admonition.

### Exposition of the Text

I. Children of God Should Walk in Love (Eph. 5: 1, 2)  
*Be ye therefore imitators of God.*

Human beings are prone to be imitators of others; we need examples to follow. God satisfied this desire

and this need on the part of humanity by sending his Son to live in human flesh in order that we might have an example to follow. We imitate God therefore when we live like his Son lived. On one occasion the disciples asked to see the Father. Jesus asked them if they had been so long time with him and had not seen the Father, and then said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." (John 14: 8, 9.)

*And walk in love.* This is the matter in which Paul is interested at this time for us to be imitators of God. In the verses preceding, he had told them to be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave them. If they walked in love, they would imitate the Father who, in love, had forgiven them of their sins. Walking in love would cause them to forgive one another.

*Even as Christ also loved you.* Not only did God set us an example of forgiving one another in love, but his Son Jesus in whom this example was manifested before us gave us this example. If Christ was willing to suffer death on the cross that we might be forgiven, we ought to be willing to forgive one another, and will do so if we walk in love as Jesus did.

*And gave himself up for us.* The suffering of Jesus on the cross is always referred to as his giving himself. "Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." (John 10: 17, 18.) The purpose of giving himself up is stated in these words, "that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." (Gal. 4: 5.) Again, he "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works." (Tit. 2: 14.)

*An offering and a sacrifice to God.* The word offering is ordinarily used of unbloody sacrifices. And this might include all of his life; his coming to earth and taking upon himself the form of man was a sacrifice, but it was not of the kind by which atonement for sin is made. His life of

poverty, of sorrow, and of suffering was in our ordinary use of the term a sacrifice, but it was not of the type by which atonement is made. There was no shedding of blood about it; it was simply an offering but not an atoning sacrifice. But the word sacrifice is used of that bloody offering which was made to God for the purpose of atoning for our sins. So his death on Calvary is here in the mind of the writer.

*For an odor of a sweet smell.* Jehovah is represented as being delighted with the smell of the sacrifices of his people. When Noah came out of the ark, he offered burnt offerings upon the altar, and Jehovah smelled the sweet savor. (Gen. 8: 20, 21.) And with reference to the sacrifices of Israel, it is said that "it is a burnt-offering unto Jehovah; it is a sweet savor, an offering made by fire unto Jehovah." (Ex. 29: 18.) This simply means that Jehovah was pleased with the sacrifices, and the offering and the sacrifice which Jesus offered to his Father were so pleasing as to make atonement for our sins and make it possible for God to forgive us of our sins if we believe and obey the Son. (Rom. 3: 24-26.) But if anyone refuses to love and obey the Son, he will have to suffer for his own sins as if the Son had never made a sacrifice on Calvary for the sins of the world.

## II. Children of God Should Refrain from Evil (Eph. 5: 3-6)

*But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness.* Those who walk in love will refrain from all such sins. Notice the wording of this text, how that covetousness is associated with fornication and all uncleanness. Paul often associates covetousness with the very worst kinds of sin. (1 Cor. 5: 11; 1 Cor. 6: 9, 10; Col. 3: 2, 3.) The world does not now so regard covetousness. In an effort to answer the question why the world does not now so regard it, Barnes says, "Because, (1) it is so common; (2) because it is found among those who make pretensions to refinement and even religion; (3) because it is not so easy to define what is covetousness, as it is to define impurity of life; and (4) because the public conscience is seared, and the mind blinded to the low and groveling character of this sin." In view of these things, Jesus warned us,

"Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." (Luke 12: 15.)

*Let it not even be named among you, as becometh saints.* Paul warns us against even talking about such sins as fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness. This does not include such warning and admonition as are here given because people have to be warned against these things. But when Paul says that these sins are not to be named among us, he meant that they should not be topics of common conversation because our imaginations would be excited and our minds would be polluted by such conversation. Notice, too, that refraining from the mention of such things in our conversation is in harmony with our profession to be saints. Those who disregard this admonition and make such things the topic of their conversation are not acting as saints should act.

*Nor filthiness, nor foolish talking, or jesting.* Paul said, "Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for edifying as the need may be, that it may give grace to them that hear." (Eph. 4: 29.) And Jesus said that we are to give account for every idle word we speak, and that by our words we will be justified or by our words we shall be condemned. (Matt. 12: 36, 37.) Foolish talking is also condemned. By this is meant "that kind of talk which is insipid, senseless, stupid, foolish; which is not fitted to instruct, edify, profit" those who may be listening. Jestings is also forbidden. The Greek word for jesting occurs only here in the New Testament, and it has both a good and a bad sense. According to Thayer its good sense is this: "pleasantry, humor, facetiousness." But in its bad sense it means "scurrility, ribaldry, low jesting." It is this latter meaning which the apostle Paul forbids us to use. He says that such a course of life is not convenient, nor is it becoming to saints. The true course of life is midway between moroseness and levity; sourness and lightness; harshness and jesting. Be benevolent, kind, cheerful, bland, courteous, but serious. Be solemn, thoughtful, deeply impressed with the presence of God and with eternal things but pleasant,

affable, and benignant. Think not a smile sinful; but think not levity and jesting harmless." (Barnes.)

*For this ye know of a surety.* Paul names some things here which he says we know of a surety. The first is that no fornicator, or unclean person, or a covetous man, or an idolater has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Paul classes these things as works of the flesh and says, "Of which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (Gal. 5: 21b.) A similar list of sins is given in 1 Cor. 6: 9, 10, and the statement is made that many of the Corinthians were such characters before they were converted, but now they were sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

*The kingdom of Christ and God.* This reference is to heaven. Paul was writing to people who were already in the church and so were citizens in the kingdom of Christ, or the kingdom of God, on earth. But of those who are citizens of the kingdom, the church, none who practice such things shall have any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Peter makes a reference to the same thing when he said that those who cultivate the Christian graces shall have an abundant entrance into "the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Pet. 1: 11.)

*Let no man deceive you with empty words.* Paul admonishes these brethren against allowing themselves to be deceived. He also implies that anyone who says that a person can indulge in this kind of activity and go to heaven is using empty words. For he says that it is on account of such a course as this that people are denied an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven.

### III. Children of God Should Walk in the Light (Eph. 5: 7-12)

*Be not ye therefore partakers with them.* One who partakes with people of this kind in this type of activity will of course be denied an inheritance in heaven, and for this reason we ought not to allow people to deceive us and lead us into partaking with them in such deeds.

*For ye were once darkness.* Paul uses the word *darkness* here to refer

to the kind of life they lived before they became Christians. Darkness has always stood for ignorance and wickedness, while light has been used to refer to truth and right. A great change has come over these people to whom Paul writes. Once they were darkness, but now they are light in the Lord. This change is also described in other words in the second chapter of Paul's letter. He says at that time ye were separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope of God in the world. This was the period of their life to which Paul refers as darkness. But since they were no longer darkness but are light, he describes them in these words: "So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone." (Eph. 2: 19, 20.) You will notice also that they are *light in the Lord*. It is because of their relationship with the Lord that they are now light. No one can be light in himself; no one can radiate spiritual light of his own wisdom and strength. It is only by our union with Jesus Christ who himself is the light which lighteth every man in the world that we are able to be a light unto others.

*Walk as children of light.* Since they have been translated out of darkness and into the kingdom of God's dear Son in whom they are light, they are to walk as becometh the children of light. To do so is to leave off fornication, all uncleanness, and covetousness, to refrain from filthy, foolish talking and jesting, and to engage in such conversation as will minister grace to them that hear and in such conduct as will by their example lead others to Christ.

*For the fruit of the light is in all goodness.* "The exhortation is confirmed by this statement of what is the natural result of light—goodness, the disposition that leads to good works; righteousness, rectitude, or integrity, which is most careful against all dishonor and injustice, and renders to all their due, and especially to God the things that are God's; and truth, meaning a regard

for truth in every form and way—believing it, reverencing it, speaking it, acting according to it, hoping and rejoicing in it, being sincere and honest, not false or treacherous." (Pulpit Commentary.)

*Proving what is well-pleasing unto the Lord.* The word "proving" is used in the sense of showing or demonstrating. If we let the light bear the fruit of goodness and righteousness and truth, we will demonstrate to the world what is well pleasing unto the Lord.

*Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.* The emphasis here is to be placed on the unfruitfulness of such a course of life. Those who engage in wickedness, uncleanness, covetousness, and in filthy, corrupt conversation will not bear the fruit of goodness, righteousness, and peace. But those who live the kind of life that is here recommended will bear that fruit. The next thing to be emphasized is the fact that we are to have no fellowship with those who so live. Paul said that this kind of life on the part of people of the world does not forbid our business and social contacts with them, but we are not to associate with them in such way as will expose us to temptation to have fellowship with them in these deeds. (1 Cor. 5: 9ff.) Next, Paul says that we are to reprove those who so live. Many are willing to refrain from fellowship with wicked characters, but they have not the courage to reprove and rebuke them for that way of life. Such a person is doing only half his duty. The first half is to refrain from evil; the second half of our duty is to reprove and rebuke those who so live. If we wish to stand in the judgment having done all our duty, we will both refrain from fellowship in these things and reprove those who engage in them.

*It is a shame even to speak of.* Paul says that it is shameful to speak of the things which are done by people who live this kind of life. We cannot as Christians engage in conversation about the wicked deeds of the underworld because such conversation would defile and pollute our minds. It could not be of any benefit to us or to those with whom we converse, so it is best as Christians that we simply not speak of

these things. This does not forbid warning people against wickedness and against ungodliness, but it does forbid us to dwell upon these things

as matters of conversation. We can spend our time to better advantage speaking of things which edify and purify.

### Lessons to Learn

1. It is natural for people to be imitators of others. We begin such in our childhood and continue as long as we live. God satisfied our desire for a pattern when he gave us Christ to show us how God would meet the temptations if he were in our place. So let us imitate Jesus in his manner of life.

2. Our conversation is revealing. It indicates our desires, motives, purposes; it opens our hearts and shows

the inner self to the world. We should be careful to confine our conversation to things ennobling and purifying.

3. Our union with Christ is a transforming experience; it turns darkness into light. It transforms that which is filthy and unfit for heaven into that which is holy and fit for association with God. Such a union is to be desired by everyone.

### 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

State and discuss three reasons why we need to be strong in the Lord.  
Why is the reading of scripture essential to the cultivation of Christian strength?  
What place does prayer have in the cultivation of this strength?  
Can you show why exercise in godliness is necessary to the cultivation of Christian strength?  
From whom does the Christian's strength come?  
In what relationship may we expect to receive this strength?  
Can you show that Christ's power is consistent with man's weakness?

#### Introduction

What is the meaning of the word *admonish*?  
Why and when do Christians need to be admonished?  
In what spirit are the warning and reproof to be given?

#### Children of God Should Walk in Love

How did God satisfy man's desire and need for an example to follow?  
What is meant by walking in love?  
By what example does Paul enforce this duty of walking in love?  
For what purpose did Christ give himself up for us?  
What is the difference between an offering and a sacrifice?  
How is God represented as responding to

the sacrifices of his people and the sacrifice of Jesus?  
What is said of those who reject the offering of Christ in their behalf?

#### Children of God Should Refrain from Evil

From what sins does our text tell us to refrain?  
What company does covetousness keep in this and other passages?  
Why is covetousness not so regarded by people of today?  
What should be the attitude of the saints toward such sins?  
What is meant by foolish talking and jesting?  
What does Paul say we can know of a surety?  
What is meant by the kingdom of Christ and God?  
What is said in our text about empty words?

#### Children of God Should Walk in the Light

What reason is given for our refraining from such evils?  
What is the meaning of the word *darkness* and the word *light* as used in our text?  
What is meant by being light "in the Lord"?  
Can you describe the walk of the children of light?  
What is the fruit of light in our lives?  
What is to be our attitude toward the unfruitful works of darkness?  
Can you distinguish between speaking of these evil things and warning people against doing them?  
What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson IV—April 22, 1956  
THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMOR

Lesson Text

Eph. 6: 10-18; Phil. 1: 27-30

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might.

11 Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

13 Wherefore take up the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

15 And having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

16 Withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil *one*.

17 And take the helmet of salva-

tion, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

18 With all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints,

27 Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ: that, whether I come and see you or be absent, I may hear of your state, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel;

28 And in nothing affrighted by the adversaries: which is for them an evident token of perdition, but of your salvation, and that from God:

29 Because to you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer in his behalf:

30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Fight the good fight of the faith." (1 Tim. 6: 12.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Phil. 1: 12-18.

Daily Bible Readings

- April 16. M . . . . . The Good Fight (1 Tim. 6: 11-16)
- April 17. T . . . . . Weapons of Our Warfare Not Carnal (2 Cor. 10: 1-6)
- April 18. W . . . . . Christ's Kingdom Not of This World (John 18: 35-38)
- April 19. T . . . . . Enemies to Be Loved (Matt. 5: 43-48)
- April 20. F . . . . . A Good Soldier of Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 2: 1-3)
- April 21. S . . . . . No Worldly Entanglements (2 Tim. 2: 4-10)
- April 22. S . . . . . Paul's Example (2 Tim. 4: 6-18)

TIME.—A.D. 62.

PLACES.—Ephesus and Philippi.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints at Ephesus and Philippi.

Golden Text Explained

1. We are soldiers—fighters, (a) We have enemies. First, we have the devil and all his hosts of wicked spirits as our enemies. (Eph. 6: 11, 12.) Next, we have the world as our enemy—the world which hated Jesus because he testified that its works were evil, the world out of which we

have been called, and which thinks it strange that we run not with them into the same excess of riot which we were formerly accustomed to do. (1 Pet. 4: 1-4.) And last, we have the flesh with its passions and lusts as a constant enemy. Paul said that he knew that in his flesh dwelt no

good thing but that in his members there was a different law warring against the law of his mind and bringing him into captivity unto the law of sin which was in his members. (Rom. 7: 18, 22, 23.) (b) We have a worthy cause for which to fight. Jesus gave his life in his fight for this cause, and we should be willing to sacrifice and practice self-denial in order that we may contribute what we can to the victory over our enemies. We may view this cause as a kingdom in which we are citizens, or as a household in which we are children, or we may view it as a body in which we are members. But from whatever point of view, we must realize that we are associated with a cause which cost the life of Jesus Christ and in which is bound up the honor of Jesus and the glory of God. (c) We have a worthy captain to lead us in this strife. (Heb. 2: 10.) Jesus is our captain, our leader in this fight, and having already gained a personal victory over sin, and over Satan, and over the world, he is able to lead us to victory in the fight. (d) We are disciplined to keep us fit to fight. The Father chastises all whom he receives as sons. (Heb. 12: 7-10.) Paul calls upon all soldiers to suffer hardships as good soldiers of Christ and says that no soldier of service entangleth himself in the affairs of this life that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier. (2 Tim. 2: 3, 4.) Again, Paul said, "Every man that striveth in the games exerciseth self-control in all things," and they do it to win a crown. Then he adds further that "I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected." (1 Cor. 9: 25-27.)

2. Ours is a good fight, (a) We stand for right and oppose all evil. No one can say he is fighting a good fight who does not stand for every-

thing that is right and contend for it. Nor can we consistently say that we are fighting a good fight unless we oppose all that is evil. For this reason, we are to reprove and rebuke those who are living in sin and those who are teaching false doctrine. (Eph. 5: 11; 2 Tim. 4: 1-5.) (b) Our efforts tend to purify us and to help others. The fight in which we are engaged is a fight for the right; hence every effort we put forth in that direction tends to purify our hearts and our lives. But since sin exists only in people, when we are fighting sin, we are helping those who are in sin and under the control of Satan. (c) Victory in this fight glorifies God and dethrones Satan.

3. Ours is the fight of faith, (a) Faith gives us courage to fight. People who do not believe strongly that God is and that Jesus Christ is God's Son, and that Jesus died to save us from our sin, and that sin will destroy our lives here and cause us to be lost in hell eternally, people who do not believe these things sincerely will not fight valiantly for the moral standards of the Bible, nor will they make great sacrifices for truth and right, nor will they be interested in the success of the church. But a deep, strong, and abiding faith in these principles of truth will give one the courage to fight regardless of the price he has to pay. (b) Faith directs us in the fight. Our belief in Jesus as our Lord and Saviour and our faith in the Bible as his last message to us will cause us to search the scriptures to know what to do and how to do it, and will cause us to follow the directions given therein. (c) Faith assures us of victory. "For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith. And who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5: 4, 5.)

### Introduction

In this lesson we see again that the Holy Spirit uses things familiar to us to teach us new spiritual lessons. Paul was in prison. Undoubtedly he was chained to a soldier a great part, if not all, of the time. Being

thus closely associated with soldiers in their armor, the Holy Spirit would not overlook this opportunity to lead him to use the soldier and his armor to teach us a valuable lesson on how to live the Christian life. Then

again, we should remember that in this conflict we are on our own. It is an individual matter. One man may win while another at his side may lose the battle. The third thing worthy of our attention here is that victory depends on our union with Christ. No one can win this battle against Satan and the flesh who fights independently of the Lord. No one

has sufficient wisdom to meet Satan in open combat and come out victorious. Satan has been engaged in the business of temptation for about six thousand years, and certainly none of us has had sufficient experience, nor do we have sufficient knowledge to grapple with such an experienced and wise enemy.

## Exposition of the Text

### I. Exhortation to Put on the Armor

(Eph. 6: 10-13)

*Be strong in the Lord.* For the full treatment of this verse, see the golden text in Lesson III, but Paul is here exhorting Christians to cultivate strength in the Lord because of the enemies which they will have to meet.

*Put on the whole armor of God.* By putting on the armor of God we will be made strong in the Lord. You will notice first that this is the armor of God, that is, the armor which God supplies his soldiers. We are not left to our own devices, nor are we encouraged to use such weapons as men use in carnal warfare. Paul says the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but are mighty before God to casting down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. (2 Cor. 10: 5.)

*That ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.* It is suggested that the devil does not come out in the open, but that he uses wiles, schemes, strategies in order to deceive and lead astray the unsuspecting and the weak. Furthermore, we are given to understand that, unless we put on the whole armor of God, we will not be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

*For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood.* Here the apostle begins describing some of the enemies which we must meet and which make it necessary for us to put on the whole armor of God. Several words are

used to describe our enemy which is no part of flesh and blood. Such words as principalities, powers, world rulers of this darkness, and hosts of wicked spirits are used to describe this enemy. Satan is described as the prince of the powers of the air. (Eph. 2: 2.) And since he is prince of the powers of the air, who can doubt that the principalities and the powers of this verse refer to those who are under his dominion. The world rulers of this darkness can refer only to Satan and his angels who are ruling over the darkness of this world. They are the source of darkness, the cause of the darkness of error and sin in the world, and give their time and effort to the extension and perpetuation of this darkness in the minds of people. These hosts of wicked spirits are said to be in the heavenly places, and since Paul says that Satan is the prince of the powers of the air, we may conclude the powers of the air are the same as the hosts of wicked spirits in the heavenly places. However, the word does not always mean this, for in Eph. 2: 6 we are said to sit together with Christ now in the heavenly places. In this verse, the thought seems to be that we have been exalted to a place of fellowship and communion with Christ in our spiritual experiences.

*That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day.* Again in this verse Paul exhorts us to put on the whole armor of God in order that we may be able to stand. We cannot place too much emphasis on the necessity of putting on the whole armor of God. One who puts on only those pieces

of the armor which he desires, or which he in his wisdom thinks are necessary, and leaves off those which he does not desire or think necessary will certainly end in failure. Surely God knows better than we what we will need in our fight against our enemies.

*And, having done all, to stand.* (a) Having made all the preparation which has been demanded of us. This means putting on the whole armor of God. (b) It is our duty to do all in our power to use this armor to the best advantage. One has not done his full duty until he has used this armor. Simply wearing the armor is not sufficient. The soldier who trusts in the mere wearing of his uniform and armor will surely end a failure, so the Christian soldier who depends merely on putting on the armor and wearing it without putting forth an effort to use it as the Lord intended it should be used will fail in his fight against sin.

## II. Description of the Armor (Eph. 6: 14-18)

*Having girded your loins with truth.* Some commentators say that the word truth here refers to revealed truth, or the sum of God's revelation to us. But this is said to be the sword of the Spirit in verse 17. We may therefore look upon the word truth here in a general sense meaning our own honesty and sincerity, our opposition to all sham and hypocrisy and insincerity. The girdle was that part of the soldier's dress and armor which bound his flowing robes tightly about him and which lent strength to his body. Even now those who engage in unusual exertions sometimes put a large, wide, leather belt around their loins for the strength which it provides. So that individual who is girded about by truth, honesty, and sincerity, will be enabled to stand against the wiles of the devil much more effectively and successfully than the individual who engages in insincerity and hypocrisy.

*The breastplate of righteousness.* The breastplate was that piece of the soldier's armor which protected him in front from the shoulders down to his thighs. It was sometimes made of metal in somewhat the form of fish scales so as to give him protection and yet make it possible for him to move about and use his arms and to stoop over when necessary. Right-

eousness is to the Christian soldier what the breastplate was to the carnal soldier. Righteousness is something that we do. (1 John 2: 29.) David said that all of the Lord's commandments were righteousness. (Psalm 119: 172.) The individual therefore that obeys the commandments of God is doing righteousness; the person who is busy doing right will be protected when the enemy of souls begins his attack. There is nothing that lends more strength and confidence to the Christian soldier in his fight against evil than the realization that he has so lived that the enemy can have no evil thing to say of him. (Tit. 2: 8b.) The one who has a clean record of righteousness in the past cannot be compromised or forced to take a less militant attitude toward sin by threats to expose his wickedness of the past.

*Having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.* The shoes enabled the soldiers to travel over rough terrain and to stand more firmly against the enemy. So Paul says that we should be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. The emphasis is to be put on the preparation; there is no way to prepare ourselves in the word of God other than through continual, diligent study of God's word. The strength of the Christian as a soldier may be measured by his knowledge and ability to use the word of God. Those who never study have little strength and will be of little value to the church. They will have little strength to overcome temptation; they will not be able to carry great burdens and discharge heavy responsibilities in the fight against sin. We need to give more time and thought to the study of the word of God. Few congregations have as effective and diligent program of teaching as is necessary to prepare every Christian soldier for the fight which he needs to make.

*Taking up the shield of faith.* As the soldier used a shield, holding it in front of him to ward off the darts and spears of the enemy, so the Christian is to use his faith in God and in Jesus Christ as God's son, and his faith in the Bible as the word of God to ward off the fiery darts of Satan. Since faith comes by hearing the word of God, or by reading it (John 20: 30, 31), we see again the

need of reading and studying God's word emphasized. In this day of doubt, skepticism, and downright infidelity and atheism, churches need to offer faith-building courses, especially to their young people who must go away to college and universities where they will be exposed to teaching which is calculated to weaken, if not utterly destroy, their faith.

*Take the helmet of salvation.* Where the carnal soldier wore a helmet to protect his head, Paul says the Christian soldier is to put on salvation. This may mean (a) realization of our salvation from sin and our place in the family of God. This realization should give one confidence and hope and lend him courage and strength for the battle against sin. (b) It may mean the hope of salvation as is expressed in 1 Thess. 5: 7, and certainly the hope of salvation from sin and from the enemy which we are fighting will give us strength and courage. John says that the individual who has this hope purifies himself. (1 John 3: 3.)

*The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.* This is the offensive part of the armor. All other pieces are defensive, but the soldier is to have his sword. And the Christian soldier's sword or piece for offensive action is the gospel, the word of God as revealed to us through the apostles and prophets. The individual who does not study that word is like a soldier who does not avail himself of a sword when going into battle.

*With all prayer and supplication.* This suggests that putting on the armor of God is not enough. It also is implied that the use of the armor may not in itself be enough. The one who uses it in self-confidence and with the attitude that he is capable within himself to take care of the enemy will surely fail. Paul suggests that these pieces of armor be put on prayerfully and that the sword of the Spirit be used in the spirit of prayer.

III. Striving for the Faith of the Gospel (Phil. 1: 27-30)

*Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel.* (a) No one can know whether his life is worthy of the gospel of Christ who does not study the requirements of the gospel. Hence we see again the necessity of

Bible study emphasized. (b) For one's life to be worthy of the gospel, that one must believe the Bible to be the revelation of God, and the requirement of God concerning him. Without faith in the Bible as the word of God, one will not be careful to live in harmony with its teaching. (c) One must put into practice that which he learns from study and which he believes to be the teaching of God. The forgetful hearer is not promised the blessing, but the doer of the word, the one who by keeping the commandments builds upon the solid rock. (Matt. 7: 24-27.)

*That ye stand fast in one spirit.* Paul pleads for unity and for concerted action on the part of these Philippians in their fight against sin. He pleads for them to stand if they were one individual making a stand against sin, to be so fully united and so harmonious and agreeable in their cooperation that they would stand like one man against sin. To strive for the faith means about the same as to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. (Jude 3.) We should strive to teach it to others, to protect it from abuse, and corruption, and perversion. It is that system of faith which comes through the gospel and not through the law of Moses; it is that faith which Paul says he once destroyed. (Gal. 1: 23.)

*In nothing affrighted by the adversaries.* Paul encourages them not to be afraid of their adversaries, not because of any wisdom or strength of their own to meet the onslaughts of the enemy, but because of their union with Christ who has already demonstrated his power to defeat the enemy, and who promises all his people their victory through faith in him.

*Which is for them an evident token of perdition.* The word "which" refers not to any word in the preceding sentence, but to the thought contained therein. Paul says that their calm courage in meeting the enemy will be an evident token to the enemy of the perdition which awaits them. And on the other hand, this calm courage of theirs will be to them a token of their salvation which is from God. On the other hand, if they should become discouraged and affrighted, that would be a token to their enemies of the weakness of their cause of their Lord and would

be a token of the success of the enemy and a token of the loss of hope and of salvation by the Christians of Philippi.

*To you it hath been granted.* (a) The first thing Paul says is granted to the Christian is the privilege of believing on Christ. We should recognize it as a privilege to believe on Christ and to have salvation through our faith in him. (b) Not only is it granted to us to believe, but also to suffer in the behalf of Christ. Paul's view of the matter is that suffering is a privilege, and he often thanked God for the privilege of suffering hardships and persecution in order that he might in that way honor Christ. "Now I rejoice

in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." (Col. 1: 24.) It is human and worldly to avoid and to refuse to suffer sorrow and hardship, but it is Christian to rejoice in such suffering. (1 Pet. 4: 12-16.)

*Having the same conflict which ye saw in me.* Paul refers to some persecution which the church at Philippi was suffering which reminded him of his own persecution. The persecution at Philippi must have been rather severe for Paul to compare it to his own when he was in prison for the sake of the gospel.

### Lessons to Learn

1. Being a soldier involves hardships, demands courage, and requires loyalty, but the soldier of Christ is provided with sufficient armor, given the leadership of the King of kings, and assured the victory over all enemies.

2. The Christian soldier is protected above, below, and in front,

but nothing for his back, which implies that there is no turning back from the fight, no time to quit, or even to take a furlough.

3. If our manner of life is worthy of the gospel, we will adorn the gospel, invite others to believe and obey it that they may have fellowship with us in this fight against sin.

### 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

State and discuss the three kinds of enemies we have.  
What is the cause for which we fight?  
How did Jesus show his estimate of the value of this cause?  
What is said of Jesus in relation to this fight against sin?  
How are Christian soldiers disciplined for this fight?  
State and discuss three reasons why this fight is called a good fight.  
State and discuss three reasons why this is called a fight of faith.  
What connection is there between Paul's environment at the time of writing and the idea of fighting a good fight?  
In what sense is this fight an individual matter?  
On what does our victory in this fight depend?  
Why does Satan have advantage over us in this fight?  
Exhortation to Put on the Armor  
Why does Paul exhort Christians to cultivate strength in the Lord?  
Why is the Christian's armor called the armor of God?  
What is suggested with reference to the tactics of Satan in this fight?  
Can you identify our enemies in this fight?  
What is meant by the term "heavenly places"?  
What is meant by "the evil day" in this text?

What two things are said to be necessary to stand in this fight?

Description of the Armor  
Of what use was the girdle to the Roman soldier?

What does that represent in the Christian's armor?

What is the Christian soldier's breastplate?

What is the meaning of the word *righteousness* here?

With what is the Christian soldier to be shod?

What responsibility does this lay on all Christians?

What is the Christian's shield?

From what will this protect us?

What is the Christian's helmet?

What is the meaning of the word *salvation* here?

What is the Christian's sword?

For what is it to be used in this fight?

In what attitude is the Christian to use this armor?

Striving for the Faith of the Gospel

How can we know that our life is worthy of the gospel of God?

How does Paul plead for unity in this text?

Why should we strive for the unity of the faith or gospel?

What is an evident token of the destruction of our enemies?

How would our lack of faith and courage affect our enemies?

What two things have been granted to us?

What evidence do we have that the church at Philippi was suffering persecution?

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

Lesson V—April 29, 1956

THE EVILS OF STRONG DRINK

Lesson Text

Eph. 4: 17-24; 5: 15-21

17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye no longer walk as the Gen'tiles 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.

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.

18 And be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit;

19 Speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;

20 Giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Je'-sus Christ to God, even the Father;

21 Subjecting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"They are swallowed up of wine, they stagger with strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment." (Isa. 28: 7b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Isa. 28: 1-8.

Daily Bible Readings

- April 23. M. . . . . A Shameful Incident (Gen. 9: 20-28)
- April 24. T. . . . . Separated from Strong Drink (Gen. 6: 1-4)
- April 25. W. . . . . Wine a Mocker (Proverbs 20: 1-7)
- April 26. T. . . . . Description of a Drunkard (Proverbs 23: 29-35)
- April 27. F. . . . . Treacherous Wine (Hab. 2: 4-14)
- April 28. S. . . . . Woe to Give Others Drink (Hab. 2: 15-17)
- April 29. S. . . . . Destiny of Drunkards (1 Cor. 6: 9-11)

TIME.—A.D. 62.

PLACE.—Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints at Ephesus.

Golden Text Explained

1. They are swallowed up. (a) Habit-forming. The drink habit grows on people as everyone who has had any experience or has observed already knows. People who tamper with strong drink are sucked into the habit as irresistibly as one is sucked into quicksand. Solomon says that the individual who drinks will see strange things with his eyes, and his heart will utter perverse things, and in spite of his ill treatment by his companions he will say, "They have beaten me, and I felt

it not; When shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." (Prov. 23: 35.) The thought here is that in spite of the evil that strong drink brings upon one and the ill health into which he is brought, he will seek it yet again. The emphasis in this passage is on this last statement, that regardless of the evils that come from it, he will seek it yet again. The prophet said, "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.) Isaiah pictures people as being so overcome and enslaved by the desire for strong drink that they will rise up early in the morning and stay late at night with it. (b) It consumes them physically. Alcohol is a poison; there is not a competent physician in the land but that will say that alcohol is poisonous to the human body. The government regulates to some extent the advertising material of the distillers and those who sell alcoholic beverages, and the federal alcohol administrators had this to say: "It is the administration's opinion that any advertisement which creates the impression that the consumption of distilled spirits will contribute to the mental or physical well-being of the consumer, or that spirits can be taken even in moderate quantities without any detrimental effects, is prohibited by Regulation No. 5 . . . all advertisements which create misleading impressions are, of course, in violation of the regulation, but the administration feels that of all the different types of such advertisements, the kind which claims health benefits, or which implies that no harmful result will follow the consumption of liquor, is by far the most objectionable." (The Foundation, May-June 1954, p. 31f.) From this we learn that the federal government will not allow liquor interests to advertise any alcoholic beverage as being beneficial to the health of individuals. This law is not too strictly enforced, but that is the position of one of the head administrators of that department of government. From another magazine we read, "It is recognized as a poison by all leading scientists. Increases death rate by eighty per cent over normal, and shortens life expectation of the average man by eight years. Responsible for twenty two per cent of admissions to hospitals for the insane. Involved in forty per cent of cases of social diseases." (The National Voice, April 28, 1955, p. 4.) Another authority has this to say, "Since 1860, physicians and scientists in many different countries have given to the world their findings that alcohol depresses, never stimulates: that its chief effect is on the nervous system, where its first action is to impair judgment and self-control; and that this condition may result from ex-

ceedingly small amounts of alcohol, as little as in 2.75 beer." (Bertha Rachel Palmer.) (c) It consumes them financially. "He that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich." (Prov. 21: 17.) "For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty." (Prov. 23: 21.) From another source we learn that intoxicating liquors are "responsible for 37 per cent of pauperism, 45.8 per cent of child destitution, leading to juvenile delinquency. It is responsible for ninety per cent of the cases of cruelty to children. It diverts 3,018,000,000 pounds of grain from food supply." (The National Voice, April 28, 1955, p. 4.) We are told that there are sixty eight million adult drinkers in the United States and that 4 million of them are hopeless addicts. These people spend nine billion dollars annually for alcoholic beverages, and if this money could be channeled into help for the poor and needy, there is no way of knowing how much sorrow and suffering could be averted. But we are also told that alcohol is in some measure responsible for more health problems than anything else except heart disease. There are ten million cases of heart disease in the United States, and nearly eight million people who are afflicted with some disease brought on by alcohol. We are told that from 1940 to 1949 there were 174,444 cases of polio in the United States, but in the same year there were 305,000 who were added to the chronic alcoholic population. We are also told that polio has caused the death of 13,132 persons during that period, and "officially reported deaths from alcoholism, generally considered notoriously unreliable because of understating the deaths from this cause, are 23,203 for 1940-49—almost double the number of polio deaths." (The Foundation, May-June, 1954, p. 26.) Another authority says that there are 1,660,000 in business and industry, and that there are thirty six million work days per year lost by these men failing to show up on account of the influence of alcohol. The biggest problem is the "colds" which are reported on Monday morning. Literally millions of men report that they are not able to come to work on Monday, and the cause as is known to all the leaders of industry is a hangover from too

much strong drink over the weekend. (Business Week, March 13, 1954.) The same source adds that besides the 36 million work days per year that are actually lost, there are "millions of unproductive days" of men who are but "half men" dragging through the day, making mistakes which cost both industry and those who use the products that are poorly made.

2. Moral and spiritual curse, (a) Broken homes. A Los Angeles County superior court judge said, "During the year 1949 I presided at 424 default-divorce hearings, and, of that number, in 327 instances intoxicating liquors figured prominently in the cause which impelled a legal separation." In poor sections of all the large cities, everybody who has any knowledge of conditions there knows that children are underfed; many of them die at an early age because of the lack of a proper diet. And many of them go uneducated as well as half-clothed because the income for the family has been squandered by the father for intoxicating liquors. Henry W. Grady said, "It comes to mislead human souls and 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 steal 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 wrecks this work." In many instances where the father spends his income for whiskey, the wife and mother is forced into industry or the office or shop in order to support her children. And consequently, the children are left to roam the streets without a mother's care. This tends to juvenile delinquency. Since children follow the example of their parents, we will trace the effect of strong drink not only to the parents, but through them to their children. In Utah, a survey was made among high school children. Of the girls was found that seventy nine per cent did not drink at all. And a check with their mothers found that seventy nine per cent of them never did drink. It was also found that fifty six per cent of the boys never had taken

strong drink, and a survey among their fathers revealed the fifty six per cent of them had never taken strong drink. This indicates that if parents refrain from strong drink and teach their children to do so, they will follow the teaching and example of their parents. (Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol, Vol. 13, p. 78ff.) (b) They err in vision, stumble in judgment. Aaron and his sons were forbidden to drink wine or strong drink of any kind "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: 9, 10. This commandment was given in connection with the death of Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, suggesting that it was given in this connection because they were under the influence of strong drink when they offered strange fire before the Lord. Among a number of other sins, the prophet reproved the people of Israel because they drank "wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief oils; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph." (Amos 6: 6.) There is a suggestion here that those who drink wine are not grieved for the sins of people, and that is just as true as can be. People who are habitual drinkers of alcohol are not concerned for the spiritual welfare of themselves, their families, or their neighbors, (c) It leads to sensuality. The prophet said, "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!" (Hab. 2: 15.) Again, "Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the understanding." (Hos. 4: 11.) The connection of strong drink and immorality is clearly implied in both the Old Testament and the New. The reader should study 1 Cor. 6: 9-11; Gal. 5: 19-21; Prov. 23: 26-35.

3. A growing problem, (a) Total amount used. In 1940, better than 144 million gallons were consumed, while in 1948 nearly 173 million gallons of intoxicating liquors were consumed. (Business Week, September 10, 1949.) There are now 200,000 taverns in the United States, and thousands of places where it can be

bought for use elsewhere such as grocery stores and package stores, while there were only about 177,000 such places before the Eighteenth Amendment was passed many years ago. In 1932 before the Eighteenth Amendment was repealed, there were 831 arrests for drunkenness for every 100,000 of the population. In 1951, there were 2,066 arrests for drunkenness for every 100,000, an increase of 148.6 per cent. In 1951 the American people consumed liquor enough to average nineteen gallons for every man, woman, and child in the United States. (The National Voice, April 28, 1955, p. 5.) (b) Increase among women. There are sixty eight million drinkers in the United States, and one out of six is a woman. (c) Increase among young people. In the survey in the state of Utah mentioned above, it was found that twenty-one per cent of the girls in the tenth and twelfth grades of high school drank either occasionally or regularly. It was also found that forty-two per cent of the boys drank occasionally or regularly. And in that same report it was found that sixty-eight per cent of those who drank did so to follow the crowd. That was the way they expressed the reason why they drank. It was also found in that report that twenty eight per cent of these boys and girls began drinking at the age of twelve, some a little earlier than that. In Mr. Hoover's report in connection with his work in the FBI, it is said there were five per cent more crimes com-

mitted in 1954 than in the previous year, and furthermore, there was an increase of 2.3 per cent more youngsters under seventeen arrested for serious offenses than in the previous year. Youths seventeen and under comprised 57.6 per cent of all arrests for car theft, forty nine per cent of all arrested for burglary, and 43.6 per cent of all those arrested for larceny. With this increase of crime and the increase of young people among those becoming addicted to drink, surely there must be some relationship. "The Foundation finds the true major crime increase to be 22.8 per cent in the cities reporting . . . Beverage alcohol consumption (in absolute alcohol) is up twenty one per cent. Parallels are either related or coincidental to it. Since the use of beveraged alcohol does produce crime, this parallel cannot be purely coincidental." (The Foundation, May-June 1954, p. 27.) This certainly poses a challenge for Christian parents especially. Do you know where your child is at night? Do you know what he does when he is out with the crowd? Do you know what your daughter does at the party, and what kind of refreshments are served, and whether drinks are brought into that place of entertainment? Do you know whether your son or your daughter visits taverns where drinks are dispensed? These are questions to which Christian parents cannot afford to turn a deaf ear in these days.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. The Effect of Living in Sin (Eph. 4: 17-19)

*That ye no longer walk as the Gentiles also walk.* Since Paul speaks of the walk of the Gentiles, it is probable that the church at Ephesus was composed largely of Gentiles. Paul describes the walk of unconverted Gentiles as being "in the vanity of their mind." The word "vanity" suggests emptiness, and a mind filled with evil desires and impure motives is an empty, vain mind so far as any good or godliness is concerned.

*Being darkened in their understanding.* Verses eighteen and nineteen are a description of the walk which is said to be in the vanity of their mind. The first point of that is the darkened understanding. This

is brought about by indulgence in sin; people who continue to indulge in sin do not have a correct understanding of the spiritual things. "A man who is intemperate has no just view of the government of the appetites. A man who is unchaste has no perception of the loveliness of purity. A man who is avaricious or covetous, has no just view of the beauty of benevolence. A man who indulges in low vices will weaken his mental power, and render himself incapable of intellectual effort. Indulgence in vice destroys the intellect as well as the body, and unfits the man to appreciate the truth of a proposition in morals, or in mathematics, or the beauty of a poem, as well as the truth and beauty of religion.

Nothing is more obvious than that indulgence in sin weakens the mental powers, render them unfit for high intellectual effort." (Barnes.)

*Alienated from the life of God.* This course in sin, because of a darkened understanding, separates one from the life that is pleasing and acceptable to God. The phrase "life of God" does not mean the life that God lives, but the life which he expects us to live.

*Because of the ignorance that is in them.* Ignorance of God's will leads one to his own vain imaginations and the fulfillment of his desires dictated by the flesh, consequently leading downward. Man unaided by inspiration has always gone downward, never upward towards God.

*Because of the hardening of their heart.* Ignorance of God's will which leads us to indulgence in our own ways will cause our hearts to become hardened. Our pleasure in the world and the things of the flesh has a tendency to harden us against the things that are heavenly and spiritual. This hardening continues until one is past feeling. By this is meant the person may continue in sin until God's word will not prick his heart. When one has so hardened his heart against the only power God has to save, that individual is beyond redemption.

*Gave themselves up to lasciviousness.* When one has come to that point where his heart is too hard to be pricked by the word of God, he gives himself up to lasciviousness to work all uncleanness with greediness. The reader should study Paul's description of the Gentile world in the first chapter of Romans in connection with this lesson.

## II. The Life of the New Man (Eph. 4: 20-24)

*Ye did not so learn Christ.* Here we have a contrast between the life which a worldly man lives and that which the Christian lives, a contrast between following worldly philosophies and following the gospel of Christ.

*That ye put away.* The things which these brethren have learned from the gospel of Christ led them to put away the kind of life which is described in the verses above. It demanded that they refrain from that course of life and turn themselves toward holiness.

*That waxeth corrupt after the lusts*

*of deceit.* This old man or manner of life described in the preceding verses was one which grew more and more corrupt after the lusts of deceit. The expression "lusts of deceit" means deceitful lusts, or lusts which are characterized by deceit. Our lusts, inclinations, and desires, and passions of the flesh are deceiving in their nature. They promise joy and satisfaction, but if allowed to go unrestrained by the purifying gospel of Christ, they lead us into a life of shame and ungodliness. In this they are deceitful.

*Be renewed in the spirit of your mind.* By this is meant the temper or disposition of the mind. One commentator says, "And that ye be renewed in all the faculties of your mind, by acquiring an enlightened understanding, a rectified will, and holy affections." (Macknight.)

*Put on the new man.* It is not enough to put off the old manner of life; we must put on the new manner of life. In fact, it is impossible for one to put off the old manner of life and not put on anything. We must follow some course of life, live after some manner. The individual who is not living after the manner prescribed by the Lord is living after the old man.

## III. Walking Circumspectly (Eph. 5: 15-21)

*Look therefore carefully how ye walk.* To walk carefully or circumspectly is to walk in such a way as to use our time to the best advantage, to use the faculties of our mind and our physical strength in such way as to honor and glorify God and be a blessing to our fellow men. To walk as the Gentiles walked before their conversion, in the vanity of their mind, in such course as would harden them against the life of godliness, would be to walk foolishly. Paul admonishes us that we should not follow a foolish course, but understand what the will of the Lord is. This suggests that following the worldly course of life is a foolish course, but following that course of life dictated by the Lord is the wise course to follow in life.

*Be not drunken with wine.* Here the apostle begins a contrast between the life of one under the influence of intoxicating liquor and the life of one under the influence of the Spirit. He is condemning the former and

commending the latter. Those who turn to intoxicating liquors for their happiness and satisfaction will find that it tends to riot, to ungodliness, and worldliness of every sort, while those who turn to the Spirit and spiritual activities for their happiness and satisfaction will find that it tends to purify and ennoble the life and make it useful. Those who turn to wine for their happiness would be found singing the songs of the god-

dess of wine, while those who turn to the Spirit and things spiritual for their happiness would be found singing psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in their hearts to the Lord. They would also be giving their time to the giving of thanks for all things which they enjoy and realizing that these good things come from God through Jesus Christ.

### Lessons to Learn

1. Man left to his own wisdom has never been able to improve himself morally, mentally, or spiritually. His path has always been downward, never upward.

2. The new man is God's creation. As God spoke and created the world, so through his word he creates within us a new manner of life.

3. The new man will find his joy and satisfaction in the things of heaven, rather than in the things of the world. We may measure our own spiritual progress by this standard. If we love and appreciate the things of the world more than the things heavenly, we are not putting on the new man.

### 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 said of the habit-forming tendency of strong drink?  
Must alcohol be classed as a food or as a poison?

From what advertising practices are liquor dealers restrained by the Federal Alcohol Administrators?

To what extent is alcohol associated with the insane and those infested with social diseases?

To what extent is alcohol associated with pauperism, child-destitution, and juvenile delinquency?

How many adult drinkers in the United States?

How much money do they spend for alcohol?

How does alcohol compare with polio in its power to destroy?

To what extent does alcohol affect industry?

Discuss the effect of intoxicating liquors on the home.

What effect does intoxicating liquor have on one's vision and judgment?

What connection is there between alcoholic beverages and sensuality?

How much liquor is consumed by the people of this nation?

What is said of the availability of liquor to those who use it?

How prevalent is drinking among women and among the young people?

What reason is given most often by young people for drinking liquor?

What relationship exists between the increase in crime and the increase of liquor consumption in our nation?

#### The Effect of Living in Sin

What evidence do we have that the church at Ephesus was composed largely of Gentiles?

What is meant by walking in the vanity of one's mind?

How is the understanding darkened?

How is a darkened understanding manifested in everyday life?

What is the effect of sin in the life of an individual with reference to God?

What relationship is there between alienation from God, ignorance, and the hardening of the heart?

To what kind of life are the ignorant and hardened in heart committed?

#### The Life of the New Man

How does a knowledge of Christ affect one's life?

What is meant by "the lusts of deceit"?

And in what way do our lusts deceive us?

What is meant by "the spirit of your mind"?

And how may we be renewed in this? What is the new man, and how do we put this man on?

#### Walking Circumspectly

What is meant by walking circumspectly? Contrast this with the foolish walk as pictured in our text.

What is said in this place of the influence of intoxicating liquors on one's happiness?

What is said of the influence in the spirit on one's happiness?

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

Lesson VI—May 6, 1956

PAUL'S REGARD FOR THE SAINTS IN PHILIPPI

Lesson Text

Phil. 1: 1-8; 4: 14-18

1 Paul and Tim'6-thy, servants of Christ Je'-sus, to all the saints in Christ Je'-sus that are at Phi-lip'pi, with the bishops and deacons:

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Je'-sus Christ.

3 I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you,

4 Always in every supplication of mine on behalf of you all making my supplication with joy,

5 For your fellowship in furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now;

6 Being confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Je'-sus Christ:

7 Even as it is right for me to be thus minded on behalf of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as, both in my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the gos-

pel, ye all are partakers with me of grace.

8 For God is my witness, how I long after you all in the tender mercies of Christ Je'-sus.

14 Howbeit ye did well that ye had fellowship with my affliction.

15 And ye yourselves also know, ye Phi-lip'pi-ans, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Mac-e-do'ni-a, no church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving but ye only;

16 For even in Thes-sa-16-ni-ca ye sent once and again unto my need.

17 Not that I seek for the gift; but I seek for the fruit that increaseth to your account.

18 But I have all things, and abound: I am filled, having received from E-paph-ro-di'tus the things that came from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"My God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."<sup>3</sup> (Phil. 4: 19.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Phil. 1: 12-19.

TIME.—A.D. 62.

PLACE.—Philippi.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints at Philippi.

Daily Bible Readings

- April 30. M. . . . . Paul's Arrival in Philippi (Acts 16:9-12)
- May 1. T. . . . . First Converts in Philippi (Acts 16: 13-15)
- May 2. W. . . . . Imprisonment in Philippi (Acts 16: 16-24)
- May 3. T. . . . . Release from Prison in Philippi (Acts 16: 25-28)
- May 4. F. . . . . Conversion of the Philippian Jailor (Acts 16: 29-34)
- May 5. S. . . . . Departure from Philippi (Acts 16: 35-40)
- May 6. S. . . . . Contributions from the Church in Philippi (Phil. 4: 14-20)

Golden Text Explained

1. Source of all our blessings, (a) God gives every good and perfect blessing. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning." (Jas. 1: 17.) (b) God gives us good things. "Or what man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone; or if he shall ask for a fish, will give him

a serpent. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matt. 7: 9-11.) And Paul reasons that, since we are children of God, we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. (Rom. 8: 17.) So our relationship with God, being that of children, entitles us to all the blessing of which we stand in

need, (c) God is faithful to keep his promises. Notice that in the language of our text Paul says "my God" shall supply your every need. Paul refers to him as *my God* because of his experience with God in supplying his own needs, and he felt sure that God would not be a respecter of persons but would supply the needs of his brethren at Philippi in the same way that he had found God faithful to supply his every need.

2. The needs of the Christian, (a) Material. The Christian is always in need of material blessings, and Jesus tells us not to be anxious about these matters, for God will supply all these things if we seek God and his kingdom first. (Matt. 6: 25-34.) And Paul had just experienced the joy of seeing his material needs supplied by the coming of Epaphroditus from Philippi with the things which he needed. (Phil. 4: 10-18.) (b) The Christian is more in need of spiritual blessings. Since it is not in man to direct his own steps, and since God's ways and thoughts are as much higher than ours as the heavens are above the earth, it is necessary that man be given instruction to overcome the ignorance of spiritual needs and how to meet the spiritual problems of life. So the Lord through revelation has given us his will, furnishing us with all things that pertain unto life and godliness (2 Pet. 1: 3); and has given us in the scriptures everything that is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto

every good work" (2 Tim. 3: 16). And since we are weak and erring, we need forgiveness, and God has promised to forgive us our sins if we are willing to confess them and to turn from them. (1 John 9.) And since we are weak and unable to meet the enemy of our souls effectively by our own strength, the Lord has promised to strengthen us with might by his Spirit in the inward man (Eph. 3: 16.) and has given us an armor by the use of which we may defend ourselves from all the darts from the evil one (Eph. 6: 14-18).

3. Measure of his gifts, (a) Not according to what we deserve. David said, "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us after our iniquities." (Psalm 103: 10.) And the prophet observed that in spite of the captivity which came upon them for their sins they had not been punished according as their iniquities deserved. (Ezra 9: 13.) (b) Our blessings are according to the riches of God. Paul says that God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think. (Eph. 3: 20.) Again, "God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work." (2 Cor. 9: 8.)

4. Where these blessings are enjoyed. Our text says that these blessings are enjoyed in Christ Jesus. In our relationship with him, we become heirs of all the blessings that God gives to his people. Paul says that all spiritual blessings are in Christ Jesus. (Eph. 1: 3.)

### Introduction

The student should read Acts 16: 9 through to the close of that chapter for a record of the establishment of the church in Philippi. Philippi is the place where Paul did his first work in Europe. He went there after having seen in a vision a man saying, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us." The first converts were Jews whom Paul found worshipping by the side of the river, implying that there were so few Jews in Philippi that there was no synagogue. And the next convert of whom we have record was the jailor who was disturbed at midnight by an earthquake

which opened all the prison doors and loosed all the prisoners. The church at Philippi was a source of genuine joy and satisfaction to Paul. They seemed to have no division there as Paul did not issue any reproof or rebuke. The only thing he suggested was that two women should be of the same mind in the Lord. Not only the absence of reproof for sin, but the presence of so many terms of endearment in the letter suggest that this was one of the best churches Paul ever established. The letter to the church at Philippi has been called "Paul's love letter."

### Exposition of the Text

I. Paul Salutes the Church at Philippi (Phil. 1: 1, 2)

*Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus.* From this we learn that Timothy was with Paul in Rome. He was not there as a prisoner, but was there as a friend and helper of the apostle. It is natural that he should be linked with Paul in this salutation, for he was with Paul when they went into Macedonia for the first time. And when Paul was compelled to leave on account of persecution, Luke and Timothy stayed for awhile in Philippi to help the infant church. (Acts 16: 1-3.) It should be noticed also that Paul styles himself as a *servant*, not as reverend or some other high-sounding title, for these things are contrary to the spirit of Christianity and to the express command of our Lord. (Matt. 20: 25-27; 23: 5-12.)

To all *the saints in Christ Jesus.* This letter is addressed to saints. From this we conclude that the word "saints" in scripture usage refers to living people and not to people who are already dead. And since it is addressed to the church, we conclude that all the members of the church were called saints. A saint is a sanctified person, one who has been set apart to a holy service.

*With the bishops and deacons.* The word bishop simply means an overseer. This word bishop, together with elder and pastor, all refer to those who have the oversight of the church. Peter says that elders are to exercise the oversight over the church (1 Pet. 5: 1, 2.) Exercising the oversight is simply another way of saying "doing the work of a bishop," so elders are to do the work of bishops. These two terms refer to the same individual. That the words "bishop" and "elder" refer to the same individual is obvious because Paul gave the qualifications of bishops (1 Tim. 3: 1ff.) while, when he wrote to Titus, he gave these same qualifications for men who were to be appointed as elders of the church (Tit. 1: 5ff.) Furthermore, in Tit. 1: 5, Paul said he left Titus in Crete to appoint elders and then in verse seven said, "For the bishop must be blameless," and continued to give the qualifications for those who would serve as bishops or overseers. The deacons were individuals who served

the church under the oversight of the elders. Sometimes brethren have said that the elders have charge of the spiritual affairs of the church while the deacons are in charge of the material or temporal affairs of the church. But the New Testament teaches that the elders are the overseers of the church, and as long as deacons are members of the church and as long as their work has to do with the church, they are under the oversight of the elders.

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* Grace is the common Greek salutation and simply means a wish for the favor of God to rest continually upon a person. Peace is the Hebrew form of salutation, and is a wish for the freedom from worry, agitation, and conflict, both inward and outward.

II. Paul Is Thankful for Fellowship in the Gospel (Phil. 1: 3-8)

*I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you.* This church maintained such peace and harmony and had been so mindful of Paul's welfare wherever he went that Paul could say truthfully that he was thankful to God for every remembrance of them. In some places the church was so torn by division and Paul's enemies were so bitter and so determined on his ruin that it was not possible for him to have this feeling of joy and gratitude when he remembered them. And he further states that in all his prayers to God he made supplication for their welfare and did so with joy, knowing that God would be pleased to bless such a fine church as that at Philippi.

*For your fellowship in furtherance of the gospel.* Paul was happy for their fellowship in the furtherance or the extension of the gospel. Fellowship means partnership; they were partners with Paul in the preaching of the gospel, Paul doing the actual preaching, they contributing of their means in order that he might give more of his time to the preaching of the gospel. So the one who preaches and the one who gives financial assistance are partners in the preaching of the gospel and the saving of souls. And Paul says their fellowship started on the very first day and continued until the present writing. How they had fellowship the very

first day may be seen by turning back to Luke's record of the establishment of the church. There we find Lydia and her helpers converted, and immediately Lydia insisted that Paul and his company come and abide in her house. (Acts 16: 15.) This would be a sharing of the expense of their stay in Philippi. Hence, they had fellowship from the very first day.

*He who began a good work in you will perfect it.* Paul was very confident that God who had begun a good work in the brethren in Philippi would complete that work, carrying it on even until the day of Jesus Christ. This *day of Jesus Christ* refers to the coming of Christ and the judgment. (2 Thess. 2: 1-3; 2 Pet. 3: 10ff.) Notice that Paul leaves himself and his helpers out of the picture when he says that it was God who began a good work among the Philippians. Of course, Paul and his helpers went from Asia into Europe to do that work. Yet in humility and with a realization of the fact that it is God's work, Paul speaks of God's doing the work. In another place he says, "For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure." (Phil. 2: 13.) The same is true today; wherever a group of God's children is found, they are God's work in that community. (1 Cor. 3: 9.) The perfecting of his work, however, until the day of judgment is conditioned upon the willingness of people to allow him to carry on that work. For we read that the church at Ephesus would have its candlestick removed except they repent. (Rev. 2: 5.) And the church at Laodicea was to be spewed out of the Lord's mouth unless they should repent. (Rev. 3: 15ff.)

*Because I have you in my heart.* This is one of those expressions of love which are so common in this epistle. It simply means that he has a warm, affectionate feeling for the brethren at Philippi. The reason why he had such a warm affection for them he says is because both in his imprisonment and his efforts to defend and confirm the gospel, they had held him in loving remembrance and had displayed their love for him and proved their interest in him by fellowshiping him in the gospel.

*Ye all are partakers with me of grace.* From this we learn that not

only the one who does the preaching will be blessed for the results of that preaching, but those who make possible the preaching by their financial help will be partakers with the preachers in the blessings that come from it. Often preachers report the results of their meetings as if they were responsible for all the good accomplished, but the Lord keeps books in heaven, and he knows how much credit goes to the preacher, how much to the faithful workers who support the gospel with their money, their time, and their efforts.

*I long after you all.* Here is another expression of Paul's tender love and sympathy and gratitude for the church at Philippi. Paul represents himself as being so united with Christ that he feels with the heart of Christ and loves with the love of Christ. This was the most tender and the strongest expression which he could use to denote the ardor and the fervor of his attachment for the brethren at Philippi.

III. Paul Is Thankful for Continual Remembrance (Phil. 4: 14-18)

*Howbeit ye did well that ye had fellowship with my affliction.* Quite a long time had elapsed since Paul had heard from the church at Philippi, but he says that it was not because they were not thoughtful of him because they lacked opportunity. (Phil. 4: 10.) Now he says that they did well that they had fellowship with his affliction, (a) They did well because they not only were fellowshiping him, but according to the statement of Jesus, they were also fellowshiping Jesus. For he said that those who visited even the least ones in prison for the sake of the gospel were visiting him. (Matt. 25: 34-39.) (b) They did well to have fellowship with Paul because in giving to him they were laying up treasures in heaven. (Matt. 19: 21.) (c) They did well to have fellowship with Paul because they gave proof of their love (2 Cor. 8: 24); and not only filled up the measure of the wants of a saint, but their deed abounded also through thanksgiving unto God (2 Cor. 9: 12).

*In the beginning of the gospel.* This refers, of course, to the beginning of the work in the district around Philippi, perhaps we could say that it means the beginning of the work in Europe. Paul refers to the time

when he first went to Philippi, and that is when he took the gospel into Europe, and he says that in the beginning of the gospel, when he departed from Macedonia and went on south toward Athens, no church had fellowship in the matter of giving and receiving except the church at Philippi. The churches at Thessalonica and at Berea and other places seemed not to have the interest in Paul and his work which the church at Philippi had. Paul did not criticize these other churches, nor say ugly things about them because they did not see fit to cooperate with him in the work he was doing. But he did commend the church at Philippi and expressed his deep joy and satisfaction for their fellowship and his appreciation for their remembrance of him on so many occasions. Paul says that those who are taught the word should communicate, or have fellowship with, the one that did the teaching. (Gal. 6: 6.) The church at Philippi was certainly obeying this teaching. They were communicating with him in his work. The word "communicate" does not mean to write a letter, but rather to have fellowship with. Paul then cites an example of their fellowship when he says, "For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my need."

*Not that I seek for the gift.* Paul wants them to know that while he appreciates the gift sent to him, he appreciates the sentiment back of it much more than he appreciates the value of the gift. Furthermore, he is glad to receive a gift from them because he says, "I seek for the fruit that increaseth to your account." As suggested above, their fellowship with Paul was a means of their laying

up treasures in heaven. And that is the sense of Paul's statement here that he seeks for the fruit that increases to their account.

*But I have all things, and abound.* Of course, this statement is to be taken in a limited sense. Paul was not the possessor of all things, but he had all that he needed, all that his necessities called for. He was more than satisfied with the generosity of the brethren at Philippi, and consequently he could say that he had all he desired.

*Having received from Epaphroditus.* Epaphroditus was a member of the church at Philippi and seems to have sent to take the offering to the apostle Paul in Rome. If he had no other business in Rome, this is certainly an indication of unusual love for and interest in the apostle. Mention has been made before of Epaphroditus as "my brother and fellow-soldier, and your messenger and minister to my needs." (Phil. 2: 25.) In this same connection we learn that Epaphroditus had been sick "nigh unto death," but God had had mercy upon him and upon Paul and had spared Epaphroditus that he might be sent back to the brethren at Philippi.

*An odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.* This offering, whether of money or provisions, which the church at Philippi had sent by the hand of Epaphroditus, is described here as an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice that pleased God. God is represented in the Old Testament as loving to smell the sacrifices of his people, and so Paul said that this contribution might be termed a sacrifice which is pleasing to God.

### Lessons to Learn

1. Each church had a plurality of bishops and deacons. Every church today should work toward that end. No church is well organized for carrying on the work that God expects of his people until it has perfected that organization set forth in the New Testament. This does not mean that they are unscriptural, but they are unorganized, still in an imperfect state.

2. The church at Philippi was mission minded. That church believed in preaching the gospel, sounding out the word. It serves as a good ex-

ample to all the churches today. No church should be satisfied to have the gospel preached only in its own community, but should reach out to lands beyond.

3. The church at Philippi believed in supporting men who were willing to sacrifice to preach the gospel to the lost. No preacher is worthy of support who is not willing to make a sacrifice, but churches need not wait until the preacher has starved to begin to support him in the work of preaching the gospel.

## 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 passages of scripture can you cite in proof that God is the source of all our blessings?  
 What promises has God made with reference to the Christian's material needs?  
 What has God promised us with reference to our spiritual needs?  
 Suggest some of these spiritual needs and the provisions God has made to satisfy our needs.  
 What determines the measure of the blessings we receive from God?  
 In what relationship are these spiritual blessings enjoyed?

### Introduction

Relate the circumstances which caused Paul to go to Philippi.  
 What evidence do we have that no Jewish synagogue was in Philippi?  
 Who were Paul's converts in Philippi?  
 Relate the circumstances under which the jailor at Philippi was converted.  
 What indicates the high esteem in which Paul held the church at Philippi?

### Paul Salutes the Church at Philippi

Who was Paul's companion in Rome when this letter was written?  
 What connection did Timothy have with the church at Philippi?  
 Who are saints?  
 In what relationship are we saints?  
 What is the meaning of the words *bishop* and *elder*?  
 Can you show that these words refer to the same individual?  
 What is the relationship between elders and deacons?  
 What is the meaning of the words *grace* and *peace*?

### Paul Is Thankful for Fellowship in the Gospel

Why was Paul thankful for every remembrance of the church at Philippi?  
 What is meant by fellowship in the gospel?  
 How had the church at Philippi fellowshiped Paul from the first day?  
 In what sense had Paul started the church at Philippi?  
 In what sense was this God's work?  
 Does God unconditionally complete every such work he begins?  
 Give examples to illustrate your answer.  
 In what sense did Paul have that church in his heart?  
 On what condition was that church a partaker with Paul of the grace of God?  
 Discuss Paul's expressions of tender love, sympathy, and gratitude for the church at Philippi.

### Paul Is Thankful for Continual Remembrance

Why had not the church at Philippi recently fellowshiped Paul?  
 State and discuss three reasons why the church did well to have fellowship with Paul at this time.  
 To what does the word *beginning* in this text refer?  
 How many other churches in Macedonia can you name?  
 How did the church at Philippi distinguish itself from all other Macedonian churches?  
 In what sense did the Philippian church communicate with Paul?  
 What was Paul's primary reason for appreciating the gift sent by this church?  
 How did Paul express his satisfaction for the gift he received?  
 Who was the bearer of this gift to Paul?  
 What unfortunate experience did he have in Rome?  
 What did Paul mean by saying their gift was "an odor of a sweet smell," well pleasing to God?  
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

## Lesson VII—May 13, 1956

### PAUL AND EPAPHRODITUS

#### Lesson Text

Phil. 2: 25-30; 4: 10-13

25 But I counted it necessary to send to you E-paph-ro-di'-tus, my brother and fellow-worker and fellow-soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need;

26 Since he longed after you all, and was sore troubled, because ye had heard that he was sick:

27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow.

28 I have sent him therefore the more diligently, that, when ye see

him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.

29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all joy; and hold such in honor:

30 Because for the work of Christ he came nigh unto death, hazarding his life to supply that which was lacking in your service toward me.

10 But I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at length ye have revived your thought for me; wherein ye did indeed take thought, but ye lacked opportunity.

11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content.

12 I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound: in everything and in all things have I learned

the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want.

13 I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"I have you in my heart."* (Phil. 1: 7.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Phil. 2: 19-23.

### Daily Bible Readings

May 7.	M.	Fellow Workers of Paul (Phil. 4: 1-3)
May 8.	T.	Timothy, Paul's Son in the Gospel (Phil. 2: 19-24)
May 9.	W.	Tychicus and Onesimus, Beloved and Faithful (Col. 4: 7-9)
May 10.	T.	Epaphras, Servant of Christ (Col. 4: 12, 13)
May 11.	F.	An Unworthy Disciple (2 Tim. 4: 9, 10)
May 12.	S.	Philippians a Liberal People (Phil. 4: 14-17)
May 13.	S.	Epaphroditus, Bearer of Good Things (Phil. 4: 10-14)

TIME.—A.D. 62.

PLACE.—Philippi.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints at Philippi.

### Golden Text Explained

1. Paul's love for the church at Philippi. (a) A great love. As Paul is a good example in just about every Christian quality, so he is a good example of love for the brethren. He speaks of his love for these brethren in these words, "How I long after you all in the tender mercies of Christ Jesus." (Phil. 1: 8.) And he tells us that his love for the lost, especially his Jewish brethren, was so great that he would be willing to be anathema from Christ in order to save them. (Rom. 9: 1-3.) And his love for these Philippians could well be a great love because it had worthy objects. The church at Philippi was an unusually fine church, and one which gave Paul more satisfaction and joy than any other church which he established. (b) Constant love. Paul was not the off-and-on type of person. He loved his converts and loved them deeply and constantly. (c) Increasing love. With the passing of years and the trying of their faith and their love for him, undoubtedly Paul's love increased. And as they showed from time to time by their gifts of money and provisions their love for him, his love for them must have by these gifts and attentions been increased. (d) Sharing love. Not only did the Philippians share with Paul the things which were necessary to his welfare, but they shared in the matter of love. As

Paul loved them deeply, so they returned that love in kind.

2. Proof of his love. (a) Paul prayed for them. We find it difficult to pray for people whom we do not love, but Paul found great joy and satisfaction in praying for the church at Philippi. Therefore, we take his prayers as a proof of his love for them. (b) Confidence in them. Paul had confidence in their faithfulness to the Lord and their loyalty to him, that they would continue to live as they had formerly lived and to be mindful of his necessities as they had in the past. (Phil. 1: 5.) And he also had confidence in their willingness to help him in spite of the fact that they had lacked opportunity to do so. (Phil. 1: 10.) (c) Paul longed after them in the tender mercies of Christ. (Phil. 1: 8b.)

3. Their response to his love. (a) Their fellowship with him in material things. Paul said that the church at Philippi was the only church that had fellowship with him in the matter of giving and receiving. (Phil. 4: 15, 16.) This was the proof of their love for him. (b) Sympathy for him in his suffering. Such was their sympathy for him in his imprisonment that they sent a messenger all the way from Philippi to Rome with money and provisions for the apostle. This is an expression of their love for him

and proof of the fact that they had great sympathy for him in his suffering in prison, (c) Their continual remembrance of him. The Philippians were careful to continue to remember the apostle. Paul says that soon after he left Philippi, the Philippians sent once and again unto

his needs. (Phil. 4: 16.) This indicates a continual thing. They did not send once and then forget him, but they continued to remember him in a substantial way. This also indicates their continued love and sympathy for him not only in his suffering, but in the work which he was doing in the gospel.

### Introduction

Paul was a lover of good men and had the knack of influencing them to associate themselves with him in his work. Among the men, it would be well to name a few. Of course, there was Timothy, his son in the gospel, and there was Titus, both of whom are best known for their association with Paul. But there is also Silas, or Silvanus, who began association with Paul on his second missionary journey and continued for a long time. Then there was Luke who began his association with Paul as Paul was about to leave Troas and go into Macedonia in answer to the "Macedonian call" in the vision he received at Troas. Among the many men who might be mentioned there is the one of our lesson today, Epaphroditus. There are some who think that Epaphroditus is the same person as Epaphras who is mentioned in Col. 1: 7 and 4: 12, 13. But the International Standard Bible Ency-

clopedia says, "He (Epaphras) must not, however, be confounded with the messenger of the Philippian community (Epaphroditus)." Henry Alford in Smith's Bible Dictionary says, "In all probability the name Epaphras is an abbreviation of Epaphroditus; but on the question of the identity of the person, the very slight notices in the N. T. do not enable us to speak with any confidence." But in his Greek New Testament, he says, "There is no reason for supposing him (Epaphroditus) identical with Epaphras." Epaphras in all probability established the church at Colossae, and at the time of Paul's letter to the church was a member of that church. (Col. 4: 12.) While Epaphroditus was a member of the church at Philippi and the messenger by whom the church sent provisions to Paul and by whom Paul sent his letters back to Philippi.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Paul Commends Epaphroditus (Phil. 2: 25-30)

*I counted it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus.* Paul wished to send Timothy to the brethren at Philippi, for he said he had no man like minded who would care truly for their estate as would Timothy. (Phil. 2: 19-21.) But he did not see his way clear at this time to send Timothy. He also expressed the hope that he himself would be able to go to see the brethren shortly. (Phil. 2: 24.) In Phil. 1: 25, he said that he knew he would abide yet a while in the flesh and that he would abide with the Philippians for their progress and joy in the faith, while in Phil. 22 he expresses only a hope that through the prayers of others he might be granted unto them. Inspiration did not make Paul or any other inspired man omniscient. Paul

did not know whether he would be released; he hoped to be; he trusted that through the prayers of others he might be released and be permitted to labor with them again, but he did not have a full, clear knowledge of the future by reason of the fact that he was inspired. Not being able to go himself because of imprisonment, and not feeling able to get along without Timothy, Paul decided to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi.

*My brother and fellow-worker and fellow-soldier.* The word "brother" denotes the love and sympathy which existed between Paul and Epaphroditus; the word "fellow-worker" denotes the common labors in which the two men were engaged; and the term "fellow-soldier" indicates the dangers and the hardships and trials which the two had in common.

*Your messenger and minister to my need.* The word translated "messenger" is the word for apostle, so Epaphroditus was the apostle of the church at Philippi. The word for apostle simply means one sent, so Epaphroditus was one sent by the church at Philippi, sent on a mission or a purpose for the church. He was not an apostle of Jesus Christ, chosen, selected, and qualified by the Lord for a special mission, but he was an apostle of the church, one chosen and sent by the church for a special purpose.

*Since he longed after you all.* This expresses the sincere and deep affection which Epaphroditus had for the brethren back at Philippi. Word had reached the church that Epaphroditus had been sick while visiting Paul in Rome, and because they were uneasy and anxious as to his welfare, he had been disturbed and wished to get word to them of his recovery.

*He was sick nigh unto death.* This sickness and the recovery of Epaphroditus throw light upon the character of the men involved, (a) In the first place, Epaphroditus was anxious that his brethren back home should know of his recovery lest they should have sorrows, and if he was not mistaken with reference to the brethren back home, they would be anxious about his welfare and would have sorrows if he should be ill for a long time or should die of that illness. We see not only their characters, but also that of Paul, for Paul was glad that Epaphroditus recovered so that he might not have sorrow upon sorrow. Paul appreciated the kindness of the Philippians and the willingness of Epaphroditus to come to him in the hour of need, and if Epaphroditus should die on that mission, Paul would feel that he was at least a secondary cause of the death of this good man. And this would add sorrow to his present sorrowing on account of his imprisonment. So their concern one for another is a beautiful thing, and sets for us an example of brotherly love and sympathy and concern for one another's welfare. In the unusual press of daily duties by which we are surrounded, we are apt to grow cold and indifferent toward the welfare of one another, and so we need to contemplate such examples of brotherly

love and genuine interest in the welfare of one another, (b) A lesson is suggested here with reference to Paul's ability to heal the sick. If Paul had that ability to heal, why was he so distressed for the welfare of Epaphroditus? Why did he not simply perform a miracle of healing, and end his own distress and the anxiety of Epaphroditus and his brethren back home? In 2 Tim. 4: 20, we find Paul actually leaving one of his fellow laborers in Miletus sick. Why did he not heal the fellow laborer and take him along? Some suppose that the apostles did not have the power of healing continuously, that the power was granted to them only on occasion when a miracle was needed. But we differ somewhat from that position, holding that the apostles had this power at all times, but that they exercised the power of healing or working any other miracle only when there was an occasion for confirming the word, the purpose for which that power was given them. (Mark 16: 17-20; Heb. 2: 3, 4.)

*But God had mercy on him.* There is no indication of a miraculous healing here. There is every implication that the illness continued for some time, long enough for the church back at Philippi to hear about it and long enough for Paul to be deeply concerned and even depressed about his condition. The mercy which is here mentioned is simply in the providence of God, that God did not see fit at this time to allow death to take Epaphroditus. And Paul indicates that one reason why Epaphroditus was preserved in the providence of God was that he, Paul, might not have sorrow upon sorrow.

*Receive him therefore in the Lord . . . and hold such in honor.* To receive him in the Lord simply means that they were indebted to the Lord for preservation of his life and for restoration to their fellowship again. And to hold such in honor is an admonition to the church to give him due reward and commendation for the service he had rendered in the face of the dangers and the sufferings which he had undergone. And Paul states the reason why Epaphroditus was to be honored—because "for the work of Christ he came nigh unto death." Epaphroditus was willing to hazard his life to supply that which was lacking in the service of the

church toward Paul, and on account of risking his life to render a service which all the church was incapable of rendering personally, Paul felt that the church should give honor to Epaphroditus as one who was willing to suffer in order that he might serve the church and bring a benefit to Paul.

## II. Paul Commends the Church for Sending Epaphroditus (Phil. 4:10-13)

*Ye have revived your thought for me.* Lest this statement imply that the Philippians had not been constant and steadfast in their thought of Paul, the writer adds, "wherein ye did indeed take thought, but ye lacked opportunity." Paul did not want them to think that he was accusing them of being thoughtless of his welfare, for he knew that the only reason he had not heard from them or received expressions of their interest and love for him was the fact that they had not had opportunity.

*Not that I speak in respect of want.* Paul was not one to complain of his condition. In another place he says, "But godliness with contentment is great gain: for we brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out; but having food and covering we shall be therewith content." (1 Tim. 6: 6-8.) He continues in our text by saying, "For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content." In order to be content in changing circumstances, one must (a) learn to put his trust in him who changes not. Those who have their trust in the world and the things of the world, such as riches and popularity and political power, will be dissatisfied and distracted when these conditions change. But the man who puts his trust in God who changes not can weather the storms of changing circumstances, (b) One must learn to value things unseen and eternal above the things that are seen and temporal. Those who value most highly the things that are seen and tangible, the things that pass away with time, will be upset and frustrated when these things which they value so highly perish or are removed from them. But the individual who values most highly the things that are spiritual and unseen, the things that are eternal, will not lose the things he so highly values, and

consequently can be content at all times because he has his abiding values at all times, (c) One must learn that life does not consist in the abundance of the temporal things which we possess. If one does not feel that he is not really living until he has all the comforts and conveniences of this life and until he can command even the luxuries of this life, he will be discontented and worried, and may even become contentious and irritable if he loses these things. But the individual who learns that life consists of union with God in Christ can have this union and the joys that come from it at all times regardless of the circumstances and environment in which he finds himself. Being of this mind, the apostle Paul could say, "I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound: in everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want." Paul was abased in that he was accused of great crime, and his accusers were able to convince the government that he was sufficiently guilty to be imprisoned for a long time. And being in prison, he felt abased. Also, the fact that he was in need of the temporal necessities of life, unable to earn them by the labors of his own hands, and dependent upon others for the very necessities of life and upon his brethren for occasional delights of this life, he felt abased. Paul was a man of great independence. He was so independent that he would not take pay from churches for the services he rendered them. So we can see why he would feel abased when he is put in the position where he is dependent upon his government and on the goodness of his brethren. And, thanks to his brethren, he had learned how to abound, for he said that he had everything that he needed since Epaphroditus had brought the things from the brethren at Philippi.

*In all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry.* Paul refers to this degree of contentment under changing circumstances which he had learned as a secret. It was a secret because only a few people know that. The words, "I have learned the secret," are the translation of one Greek word which, literally translated, means "I

am initiated." The word was commonly used with reference to old Greek mysteries which only the initiated were allowed to know, and so Paul says that by his experiences of suffering for the Lord he has learned the secret, he has been initiated into the society of the sufferers and of those who abound. The Lord's blessings had abounded unto him in so many ways that he could not count them, and his suffering had abounded in so many ways that he could hardly enumerate them. And so he, by experience, had been initiated into a knowledge of how to abound and how to be in want.

*I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me.* The word "all" must be taken in a limited sense here. Surely Paul did not mean to say that he could do just any super-human thing, or accomplish any impossible task. But we must be limited to the context and interpret Paul as saying that he can be content under any and all changing circumstances into which the Lord sees fit to lead him. Notice too that he does

not say that he can be content under any and all circumstances because of any strength or wisdom which resides within himself, but he can do all these things in him, that is, in the Lord, who strengthens him. He could endure the thorn in the flesh because the Lord whom he served would give him strength sufficient for the trial. He could be abased by being accused of crimes of which he was not guilty, by being imprisoned for crimes he did not commit, and he could bear this with joy because the Lord would give him strength to do so. And when his wants were fulfilled, his needs supplied, he could bear this humbly and thankfully because the Lord would give him this humility and good sense to bear these things and enjoy them as a Christian should. Nor does the fact that the Lord gives us strength and grace to bear these trials mean that the Lord forces us to meet these trials as we should; he simply supplies the strength to do so and we must have the courage and the determination to use that strength which the Lord supplies.

### Lessons to Learn

1. This lesson teaches us that we should have sympathy and Christian love for the brethren. As Paul was anxious for the welfare of his fellow-servant in order that the brethren at Philippi would not be anxious about his welfare, so we ought to be anxious for the welfare of our brethren and be willing to spend some time in prayer in their behalf, spend some energy and effort in relieving their needs and comforting them in their distresses.

2. There is need for all of us to cultivate the ability to be content in whatever circumstances we find our-

selves. If we are in prosperity, we should be careful to be humble and to use that prosperity for the glory of God. If we are in adversity, we should be careful to cultivate contentment and refrain from all murmurings and complaints. To complain with reference to our lot in life is to accuse the Lord of not being good to us, for he has promised that all things will work together for good if we love and serve him. As long as we can believe that the circumstances of our lot in life will work out for good, we can overcome our worries and refrain from murmuring on account of them.

### 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 Paul express his love for the church at Philippi?  
How did he express the extent of his love for his Jewish brethren?  
What can you say of the constancy of Paul's love?  
In what sense was Paul's love an increasing love?  
What is meant by the sharing love of Paul?

State and discuss three proofs of Paul's love for the church at Philippi.  
State and discuss three ways in which the church responded to the love of Paul.

#### Introduction

Name and discuss as time permits some of Paul's associates in gospel work.  
Where did Luke join Paul's party?  
What fellow worker of Paul received special mention in our lesson today?  
With what other worker is Epaphroditus confused?  
Where did each of these men live, and what work distinguishes the one from the other?

Paul Commends Epaphroditus  
Whom did Paul wish to send to Philippi?  
For what reason?

Did Paul's inspiration enable him to foresee his activity among the churches?

What thoughts are indicated by the words *brother, fellow-worker, and fellow-sufferer*?

What was the relationship between Epaphroditus and the church at Philippi?

What does the illness of Epaphroditus in Rome reveal concerning the characters of the church and the men involved?

What light does this experience throw on the ability of Paul to heal the sick?

How was the mercy of God manifested in this case?

How did Paul exhort the brethren to receive Epaphroditus back into their fellowship?

Paul Commends the Church for Sending Epaphroditus

What evidence do we have of the continued love of the Philippians for Paul?

Why had not that love been manifested continually?

What reason does Paul assign for being content with what we have?

State and discuss three lessons one must learn in order to be satisfied and content under changing circumstances.

How had Paul learned the lesson of abasement with contentment?

In what way did Paul show a spirit of independence?

What secret did Paul say he had learned?

What idea is suggested by this word *secret*?

How did Paul express confidence that he would be able to bear all his trials?

Name and discuss some of the outstanding trials the Lord enabled Paul to endure.

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

## Lesson VIII—May 20, 1956

### PAUL'S SACRIFICES FOR CHRIST

#### Lesson Text

Phil. 3: 1-14

1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not irksome, but for you it is safe.

2 Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision:

3 For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Je'-sus, and have no confidence in the flesh:

4 Though I myself might have confidence even in the flesh: if any other man thinketh to have confidence in the flesh, I yet more:

5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of ts'-ra-el, of the tribe of Ben'-ja-min, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Phar'-i-see;

6 As touching zeal, persecuting the church; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless.

7 Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ.

8 Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Je'-sus my Lord:

for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ,

9 And be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, *even* that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith:

10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death;

11 If by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead.

12 Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Je'-sus.

13 Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold: but one thing *I do*, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before,

14 I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Je'-sus.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"FOR *to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*" (Phil. 1: 21.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Phil. 3: 15-21.

## Daily Bible Readings

May 14.	M	Paul Recounts His Conversion (Acts 22: 3-21)
May 15.	T	Paul Did Not Confer With Flesh and Blood (Gal. 1: 11-17)
May 16.	W	Paul Not Dependent on Other Apostles (Gal. 2: 1-11)
May 17.	T	Paul's Hardships (2 Cor. 11: 16-33)
May 18.	F	Paul's Marks on His Body (Gal. 6: 12-18)
May 19.	S	Paul Defends Himself (2 Cor. 11: 1-12)
May 20.	S	Paul's Independence (1 Cor. 9: 1-27)

TIME.—A.D. 62.

PLACE.—Philippi.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints at Philippi.

## Golden Text Explained

1. The Pharisee had his ideal of what the highest, most satisfying type of life was. He thought if he could clothe himself in fine robes and enjoy the chief seat in the synagogue, and if he could enjoy the applause of the people when he gave alms or when he prayed, he would be enjoying the greatest life possible. To him this was life; to him life was a self-centered experience. He was not so much concerned about the honor and glory of God as he was his own satisfaction. He preferred to draw the attention of people to himself rather than to the God whom he worshiped. He was not so much concerned about what he said in prayer as he was that the people should know that he was praying, and that he prayed for long periods of time. If he could gain the attention and the applause and commendation of the people, he was satisfied. To him that was life.

2. The rich man had his idea of what life was. To him life was a big farm, perhaps many farms with rich soil and many servants to till the soil. To him life was great bumper crops, that filled his barns to overflowing; and to him life was a mansion, a fine house in which to live with all the comforts and many of the luxuries of life. He enjoyed dressing himself in purple and fine linen and loading his table with fine things to eat. Perhaps he enjoyed having his friends come to enjoy these things with him. He was more concerned about filling himself and satisfying his own desires than he was in ministering to the needs of the beggar at his gate. He was more interested in filling his barns than he was in filling the stomachs of the hungry; he was more concerned about the comfort of himself and his family than he was about the comfort of those who were poor and hungry and sick.

3. Demas had his ideal of what real life is. He looked for the gay crowds and the bright lights. He longed for sensual delights with reveling companions; he found no pleasure in association with the great apostle Paul in his prison cell, and so he longed for the pleasures of life, the gaiety of this world and forsook his post of duty and left Paul alone to bear his sufferings, his sorrows, and his burdens. To Demas, life was an experience of gaiety, of merriment, of satisfying the desires and the passions of the flesh.

4. The good moral man has his ideal of life. To him, life is a happy home, a good job or a business of his own, and a quiet, clean neighborhood in which to live, and he enjoys freedom from religious duties, from the outward ordinances of the church. He does not care to be burdened with the responsibility of the church and carrying on the services of the church. He does not care to be responsible for providing a part of the program of the period of worship; he enjoys his freedom from this. To him, this is life. That Jesus died to establish the church means nothing to him. That Jesus came and gave himself up for sinful men and loved the church so much that he died to make its very existence possible means nothing to this good moral man. He intends to live such a good, clean life that he can be saved without the sufferings of Christ and without the influence of the church for good in his life.

5. Paul—CHRIST. According to our text, Paul's ideal of life was Christ. To him, the ideal life is a Christ-centered life, (a) To learn more of Christ. Paul could not be satisfied without knowing all it was possible for him to know about Je-

son Christ. He wanted to know the relation of Jesus to the heavenly Father; he wanted to know his own relation to Jesus Christ. And so, he would give himself to study and to meditation to know everything possible about Christ and his relation to him. (b) To live more like Christ. Paul's greatest desire was to leave off everything that would make him unlike Christ and to add on every word and action that would tend to bring him more into the likeness of Christ. He wished to think the very thoughts of Christ. He wanted his conversation to be Christ-like, and

he wanted his everyday life to be lived just as Christ would have lived it. In fact, he said that it was no longer he that lived but Christ Jesus lived in him, and that Jesus was made manifest in his mortal body, (c) To bring Christ more honor and glory. Paul's one purpose in living was to honor Christ, and he said it did not make any difference to him whether he lived or died. If he lived, he would honor Christ in his life; and if he died, he would die in such way as to bring honor and glory to his Lord. (Phil. 1: 20.)

### Introduction

At the time of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, the Lord said to Ananias, "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake." (Acts 9: 16.) In this suffering, the apostle Paul says that he stood out above and beyond others of his time, and he said that he thought God had set forth the apostles, including himself, as men doomed to death, made a spectacle to the world and to angels. He also said they were fools for Christ's sake, that they were in weakness and dishonor, that they suffered hunger and thirst and nakedness, that they were buffeted and had no certain dwelling place. They toiled with their own hands; they were reviled and persecuted; they were defamed and made the filth of the world and the offscouring of all things. (1 Cor. 4: 9-13.) Paul's enemies at Corinth made it necessary for Paul to name some of the things he had suffered in order that he might preach the gospel to the lost and glorify the Lord. Being forced thus to boast, he would list only sufficient of his sufferings and his accomplishments as were necessary in order to prove his point. The reader

will do well to read 2 Cor. 11: 16-12: 10 in order to see what Paul said of his own suffering. Then we may view Paul's sufferings and sacrifices from another angle. He denied himself the pleasures, the comforts, and satisfactions of a home. He did this in order that he might be free to go and preach the gospel wherever the Lord might indicate that he should go. Furthermore, he could have had a good business and undoubtedly could have made a success in business, but he denied himself the profits and the security which a good business would have brought him in order that he might give his time to the preaching of the gospel. Men who love their homes and enjoy the security of good jobs and thriving businesses ought to be able to appreciate the sacrifice which Paul made to preach the gospel. If we were called on today to leave our homes and liquidate our business and give up the profits of such in order to go out and serve the Lord in whatever capacity we are able to serve him, would we be willing to make that sacrifice?

### Exposition of the Text

I. Exhortation and Warning (Phil. 3: 1-3)

*Rejoice in the Lord.* (a) We may rejoice in the blessings of the Lord. He was willing to come to this world of sin and sickness, of sorrow and suffering, and die in order that we might have life. He was willing to gather men together, train them, and send them out into all the world preaching the gospel, that people might be saved through the power

of that gospel. Knowing the dominion of sin and the difficulty of refraining from doing wrong, we have right to rejoice in the Lord who can save us from sin and finally take us out of the presence of sin to take us where there can be no sin nor anything that defiles. (b) We can rejoice in the hope which we have in Christ Jesus. Those who have accepted Christ as their Lord and as their Saviour have a right to hope

for final victory over sin and over death, and to live in a place of eternal happiness, peace, and joy. This is the greatest hope that men know anything about. It is this hope that purifies us, that strengthens and encourages us, that gives us determination to fight on when otherwise we would give up in despair, (c) To rejoice in the Lord also suggests that we find our genuine joy and satisfaction in the Lord. It is a fine thing when people can rejoice in the Lord and not in the things of the world; rejoice in the Lord and not in the satisfying of the flesh. We ought to learn to find our happiness in things that are heavenly, things that are spiritual; and when we do, we will be rejoicing in the Lord and not in the things of the world.

To write the same things to you . . . is safe. The apostle Paul is writing some of the same things which he preached to the brethren at Philippi when he was with them. And he said that writing these things to them was not irksome to him, but for them it was safe. Often, we are said to be put in remembrance of the things which the apostles preached. And Paul told Timothy if he would put the brethren in remembrance of certain things he had learned, he would be a good minister. It is safe for us to have these things called to our remembrance, for our impressions are deepened, our resolutions are strengthened, and our determination is increased when we are made to remember our duties and our responsibilities, and when the fearful consequences of sin are brought to our minds again.

*Beware of the dogs.* Certainly Paul is not telling the brethren to beware of beasts, but he is warning them to beware of men who have dispositions and characters like dogs. "The term dog also is used to denote a person that is shameless, impudent, malignant, snarling, dissatisfied, and contentious and is evidently so employed here." (Barnes.) Paul also warns them to beware of the *concision*, meaning the Jews who put so much emphasis on the rite of circumcision and attempted to compel the Gentiles to submit to that rite, along with other ceremonies of the law, in order that they might be acceptable to the church.

*For we are the circumcision.* Paul

affirms here that Christians, not Jews, hold to the true doctrine and practice of circumcision. He explains this to the Colossians by saying, "In whom ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ; 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. And you, being dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, you, I say, did he make alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses." (Col. 2: 11-13.) In this we learn that the putting off of sin, which is done in forgiveness, is now the true circumcision made by Christ.

II. Paul's Right to Boast in the Flesh (Phil. 3: 4-6)

*Though I myself might have confidence.* Paul had just said that we are the true circumcision, we worship God in spirit, and we glory in Christ and have no confidence in the flesh. Having brought up this matter of confidence, he now sets forth his right to have confidence in, or to boast in, the flesh. And he bases his right on the things which appealed so much to Jews and the things which they honored and which they trusted, and of which they boasted.

*Circumcised the eighth day.* This covenant of circumcision was made with Abraham and his seed after him throughout all their generations. (Gen. 17: 9ff.) And Moses incorporated the rite of circumcision into the law which he gave. (Lev. 12: 3.) No Jew was allowed to have any part in the affairs of the nation and in the worship in the temple and synagogue unless he had complied with the rite of circumcision.

*Of the stock of Israel.* Paul says that he was a descendant of Jacob, another name for Israel. He was, therefore, of pure descent from Abraham through Isaac and Jacob and one of the twelve sons of Jacob. He was not of Abraham through Esau or one of the sons of Keturah, but he was of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob.

*Of the tribe of Benjamin.* This, of course, was one of the twelve tribes of Israel, and Benjamin was one of the two tribes that remained with the temple and the temple worship

when the ten tribes were led off under Jeroboam to form the Northern Kingdom, which kingdom finally went into captivity never to return.

*A Hebrew of Hebrews.* This did not add anything materially to his line of honor and accomplishment, but it was the expression commonly used to denote the highest degree of loyalty and of patriotism to the Hebrew nation. It not only meant that he was of Hebrew ancestry, but that he and his parents had maintained the Jewish language and customs and forms of worship down through the generations.

*As touching the law, a Pharisee.* As all know, there were several parties among the Jews—the Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, and Essenes. The latter two were unimportant. Practically all Jews were either Pharisees or Sadducees. The Pharisees believed in angels, spirits, and the resurrection, and in separating themselves from the defilements of the world, being exact in the keeping of the law, even the very finest details. Nor was Paul a halfhearted or lukewarm Pharisee. He was so zealous in his religion that he persecuted the church, thinking that the church was set to destroy Judaism.

*As touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless.* Paul does not mean to claim sinless perfection, nor does he intend to claim that he kept the law perfectly as God requires obedience on the part of one, but he is speaking of his obedience to law from the Jewish point of view. He had done all those things which the Jews thought that men must do in order to be saved. The Jews, especially the Pharisees, thought that by the keeping of the law and traditions of the elders they would merit their salvation as children of Abraham. And so Paul says that as touching the righteousness which was required from their point of view, he was found blameless.

### III. Paul's Sacrifice to Gain Christ

(Phil. 3: 7-11)

*These have I counted loss for Christ.* All the things which Paul once trusted to bring him salvation he had found to be utterly worthless, and he had given them all up in order that he might win Christ and be saved through him. These were things that built a wall of separation around one great family or nation

of people and excluded all others and denied salvation to those who were so unfortunate as not to be born into that family. Christ is for all the world, regardless of race or color. So Paul was willing to give up the narrow and nationalistic conceptions of that which was acceptable to the Lord and broaden his views to include all those who would be submissive to Christ.

*And I count all things to be loss.* Not only the things enumerated that had to do with his Jewish connections, but everything else of a worldly, temporal, fleshly sort Paul counted to be loss as compared to the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, the Lord. It is a pity that not all people can view the knowledge of Jesus Christ as being as valuable as Paul viewed it. Paul was willing to give up everything else in all the world if he could but have the knowledge of Jesus Christ, for that knowledge brings salvation. If parents could realize that a knowledge of Jesus Christ gained from the Bible is worth more to their children than anything else and everything else combined in this world, surely they would be more concerned about their children's attending Bible study, attending church regularly, and practicing the things that are taught in the Bible. Parents spend thousands of dollars educating their children to make a living and bring them up under certain environments and to meet certain standards of society, and yet those same parents spend little time or money or effort to bring their children to a knowledge of Jesus Christ and the word of God. Such parents cannot truthfully claim that they love their children and that they have the highest good of those children at heart.

*For whom I suffered the loss of all things.* The word "all" here must be taken in a limited sense. Paul had not lost his life; he had not lost his health; he still had many of his friends. But the word "all" is to be limited to those things which are contrary to his soul's best interest, is to be limited to those things which are contrary to the principles of Christ, and which would make living the Christian life impossible. He was willing to give up *all* those things in order that he might have Christ. It was not necessary to give up the

things which he possessed that were in harmony with the principles of Christ and that contributed to his living the Christian life. Notice next his attitude toward the things which he had lost in order to gain Christ. He says that he counted them as refuse or trash. When compared to the spiritual values which he found in Christ, those things he once boasted of and in which he trusted are as trash.

*Not having a righteousness of mine own.* The thought in this verse is that Paul now realizes that he cannot be justified by perfect compliance with the law of God and that his justification is conditioned upon his faith in Jesus Christ. He realized that if justification was to be gained by perfect compliance with law that he, along with every other human being, would fail and would finally be lost. So he was seeking his justification by faith in Jesus Christ. Justification by faith does not require sinless perfection. It does require that a man be obedient and faithful in that obedience, but the law of justification by faith admits of human weakness and error and makes provision for our sins of ignorance and weakness.

*That I may know him.* There are four things suggested in this verse which Paul wished to know: (a) he wished to know Christ. He wished to know everything he could learn about his Maker and his union with the Father, and his coming to this earth and being made in the likeness of men. He wished to know all he could of the will of Christ so that he might conform his life to that will, (b) He wished to know the power of the resurrection of Christ. This means that he wished to understand and experience that influence which the knowledge of the resurrection of Christ would have on him. The resurrection of Christ confirms all the claims that Christ ever made during his lifetime and puts the stamp of approval of God the Father upon all the claims of Christ and all the teaching that he did and gives us assurance of our resurrection from the dead and our eternal life with the Lord. And so to know the power of his resurrection would be a great transforming, an energizing force in the life of an individual, (c) Paul wished to know the fellowship of

Christ's suffering. He wished to have a part in suffering for the church and for the glory of God. Paul counted it a privilege, something granted of the Lord, to be able to suffer for the Lord, (d) Paul wished to become conformed unto the death of Christ. Jesus gave his life for the church and to save humanity. Paul would like to become conformed to that death, especially in purpose. He would like to die for the glory of the Lord; he would like to die in the service of humanity, and in this way he would become conformed to the death of Christ. His purpose for expressing these desires is, "if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead." Certainly Paul knew that he would be one in that great resurrection at the coming of Christ in which all men would participate. (Acts 24: 15.) But he was striving that he might have a part in that resurrection which was unto life, of which Jesus spoke. (John 5: 29.)

#### IV. Paul's One Object in Life (Phil. 3: 12-14)

*But I press on.* The apostle says that he has not yet attained unto perfection, but he is pressing onward and putting forth every effort possible to attain unto that for which the Lord laid hold upon him. The Lord had laid hold upon him for the purpose of making out of him one who would be serviceable in this life and who would give honor and glory to him both in life and in death and would be fitted by the power of God and his experiences in this life to enjoy heaven with him throughout eternity; and Paul was striving toward these things, realizing that he had not yet reached perfection.

*Forgetting the things which are behind.* Paul uses some figures here from the Grecian games, and says that he forgets everything that would hinder him; he lays aside all the weight and the worries that would hinder him in his race, and he stretches forward to the things that are before him. This is to suggest that we are to forget the mistakes of the past and that we are to press on toward the highest degree of perfection possible for us to attain.

*I press on toward the goal.* Here we have the picture of a runner with his eyes fixed on the goal at the end of the race track. He has forgotten

the things that are behind; he is putting every ounce of energy into the race; he is pressing onward, not allowing anything to cause him to turn aside either to the right or the left, and he expects a prize at the goal line. The Grecian runner disciplined himself for a long time before the race and put every effort possible into the race in order that he might receive a corruptible crown, but Paul says that we deny ourselves ungodliness and everything that would hinder our running the race with patience in order that we may receive an incorruptible crown. (1 Cor. 9: 24-27.) The fact that Paul did not count himself as having already laid hold on that for which

Christ Jesus had laid hold on him is proof that he had not attained unto the prize which was waiting at the end of the race. The Lord had laid hold on him in order that he might enjoy eternal salvation with him in heaven. Paul said I have not yet attained unto that; I have not yet laid hold on that prize for which the Lord laid hold on me, so Paul is simply saying that he had not yet laid hold on eternal salvation. There are those who claim that a Christian has salvation already in this life and that it is impossible for him to lose that eternal salvation, but in this passage Paul denies that he had already laid hold on that eternal salvation.

### Lessons to Learn

1. Repetition of the principles and of the commandments and promises of the gospel is good for us. It is safe for us to read and re-read these great principles revealed in God's word. It is unsafe to neglect reading them.

2. It is not enough to give up the world and worldly things. Like Paul we must learn to count these things

as trash in comparison with the heavenly riches.

3. We are not to allow the pleasures and problems of life to divert our attention from the business of running the Christian race successfully. Nor are we to allow these things to deprive us of the prize that is awaiting at the end of the way.

### 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 was the Pharisee's ideal of the most satisfying type of life?  
According to the rich man, what was the highest type of life?  
What type of life did Demas prefer?  
What is the "good moral man's" idea of the most satisfying life?  
State and discuss three things demanded by Paul's ideal of a Christ-centered life.

#### Introduction

What did the Lord say he would show to Paul?  
What was Paul's conception of the apostles' position before the world?  
Discuss in detail some of the things which Paul suffered, and contrast this with the trials of present-day Christians.  
Would one likely be termed a fanatic today if he were to make such sacrifices as were made by Paul, Luke, and others of the first century?

#### Exhortation and Warning

State and discuss three things suggested by rejoicing in the Lord.  
What is the value of repetition in gospel teaching?  
What is meant by the statement to beware of the dogs?  
What did Paul mean by saying that Christians are "the circumcision"?  
How and when do we receive the circumcision of Christ?

Paul's Right to Boast in the Flesh  
Name the things which Paul said gave him a right to boast in the flesh.

Was this right to boast such as would appeal to Gentiles or to Jews?  
What was the social and religious position of a Jew uncircumcised?  
Of what tribe was Paul a member?  
Of what religious sect of the Jews was he a member?  
What did Paul say about his relation to the law of Moses?

#### Paul's Sacrifice to Gain Christ

What had Paul sacrificed in order to gain Christ?  
What did Paul find in Christ which he valued more highly than the things of which he once boasted?  
How do parents today show a lack of appreciation of the knowledge of Christ in themselves and their children?  
What is the meaning of the word "all" in Paul's statement concerning the loss of all things?  
Can you distinguish between the righteousness which is of the law and that which is by faith?  
State and discuss four things which Paul wished to know.

#### Paul's One Object in Life

Did Holy Spirit baptism enable Paul to attain to perfection?  
What was Paul's attitude toward the things of the past?  
Toward what goal was Paul continually pressing?  
Did Paul claim to possess eternal life in a sense that he could never lose it?  
What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson IX—May 27, 1956

PAUL WRITES TO THE COLOSSIANS

Lesson Text

1 Paul, an apostle (of; Christ Je<sup>sus</sup> through the will of God, and, Tim-6-thy our brother,

2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ *that are* at Co-los'-sae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

3 We give thanks to God the Father of our Lord Je<sup>sus</sup> Christy praying always for you,

4. Having heard of your faith in Christ Je<sup>sus</sup>, and of the love which ye have toward all the saints,

5 Because of the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel,

6 Which is come unto you; even as it is also in all the world bearing fruit and increasing, as *it doth* in you also, since the day ye heard and knew the grace of God in truth;

7 Even as ye learned of Ep-a-phras our beloved fellow-servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf,

8 Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard *it*, do not cease to pray and make request for you, that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understandings

10 To walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

11 Strengthened with all power, according to the "might of his glory, unto all patience and longsuffering with joy;

12 Giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*As therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.*" (Col. 2: 6.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Col. 1: 13-23.

Daily Bible Readings

May 21.	M	Exaltation of Christ (Col. 1: 15-23)
May 22.	T	Paul a Minister (Col. 1: 24-29)
May 23.	W	Paul's Ambitions for the Colossians (Col. 2: 1-6)
May 24.	T	Affection to Be Set on Things Above (Col. 3: 1-4)
May 25.	F	Individual Responsibilities (Col. 3: 18-25)
May 26.	S	Admonitions to the Colossians (Col. 4: 1-6)
May 27.	S	Personal Salutations (Col. 4: 7-17)

TIME.—A.D. 62.

PLACE.—Colossae.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints at Colossae.

Golden Text Explained

1. As ye received Christ. In order to get the lessons which Paul intended from this verse, it will be necessary for us to understand that he was combating certain doctrines of Gnosticism. (1) A claim on the part of those initiated to possess a special knowledge which was superior to faith. (2) The essential separation of matter and spirit. They believed that matter was not only the source of all evil but that itself was

essentially evil, and that there could be no contact between matter and spirit without contamination of the spirit. (3) They believed that the true God was entirely and wholly separated from matter, could have no contact with matter, so that the universe as we see it was created by some inferior powers, and they believed that Jesus Christ was the highest of these inferior powers, so a created being and not one eternal

with the Father. (4) One group of Gnostics separated the spiritual being, Christ, from the man, Jesus. They held that Jesus was simply a human being with an earthly father as well as mother, and that the Christ descended on him at the time of his baptism, but left him just before his death. This constituted a flat denial of the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth.

(5) One group of the Gnostics held to ascetic principles and believed that the spirit was made pure by the suffering and by mutilation of the physical body. Another group believed that there was no connection between the spirit and the body, the spiritual and the material, and that the material was wholly responsible for any wrongdoing and that the spirit bore no responsibility and was not guilty of any sin in licentious acts of the body. With this view of some of the doctrines which Paul was combating, we are now ready to consider how these Colossians had received the Christ. (a) As the Son of man. Jesus referred to himself as the Son of man. (Matt. 16:28.) And Stephen referred to him as the Son of man on the right hand of God. (Acts 7: 56.) This expression denotes the humanity of Christ. He was Son of man, that is a human being, just as human as you and I. (b) He is referred to as the Son of God. (Matt. 8:29; Luke 4: 41. This expression denotes his divinity. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God in a way that no one ever was or ever will be the Son of God, and for this the Jews accused him of blasphemy and tried to stone him. (John 10: 29ff.) There is such a blending of the human and the divine in one personality that no one can attribute this act to the human and another act to the divine. He was one person, one personality. (c) As their Saviour from sin. The church at Colossae was made up of people who had recognized their sins and their need of salvation from sin, and they had put their faith in Jesus as the Son of God and Saviour of humanity from sin. They had accepted his death as an atonement for their sin and relied upon the value and efficacy of that death to save them from their sins. According to Gnosticism, sin is not "the act and the disposition of the human will in rebellion against God; it is only a physical act or quality inherent in the

body and in matter everywhere. Redemption therefore does not consist in the work of Christ for us on the cross, and the applying of the benefits of that work by the Holy Spirit of God in the renewal of the moral nature of man. Redemption is simply man's efforts to secure emancipation from the flesh—from physical evil." (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.) (d) As prophet, priest and king. The Colossians had received Jesus as the prophet of God who would reveal the will of God to them through his inspired apostles and prophets. They had received him as priest who would offer their sacrifices of praise and prayer and service unto God, and they had received him as king to rule over them in every avenue of life.

2. Walk in him. The reader will notice that the word *so* is in italics, and therefore is not to be found in the original. The idea that the manner of our receiving Christ is to be the manner in which we walk in him, and that this manner is emphasized by the word *so* is a mistake. Adam Clarke says on this point: "His meaning is simply this: seeing ye have embraced the doctrine of Christ, continue to hold it fast and not permit yourselves to be turned aside by sophisticated or Judaizing teachers." In order for the Colossians to walk in Christ as they had received him, we suggest three things. (a) Careful examination of all doctrines concerning Christ. John tells us to prove the spirits whether they are of God and gives us the standard by which we can determine if they are of God. If they confess not that Jesus is come in the flesh, they are not of God. (1 John 4: 1-3.) (b) Rejection of all doctrines differing from what they received by inspiration. John tells us that we are not to go beyond the teaching of Christ, and if any man comes to you and brings not this teaching, he is not to be received or given a greeting. (2 John 9-11.) (c) Grow in faith, love, and appreciation of Jesus Christ as set forth above. The word "walk" implies progress. Consequently, we conclude that Paul wished that they should make progress, that they would increase in their faith in Jesus as the Son of man, the Son of God, their Saviour from sin, and as their prophet, priest, and king.

## Introduction

That Paul established the church at Colossae cannot be proved with certainty. Barnes quotes arguments from Lardner to prove that Paul established the church at Colossae on one of his trips through Phrygia and Galatia. (Acts 15: 40, 41; 16: 1-6; Acts 18: 23.) Not any of the arguments, nor all of them put together, are conclusive. Other authors are just as sure that Epaphras and other residents of Colossae attended Paul's preaching and teaching at Ephesus, when it is said that all Asia heard the word of the Lord under his preaching. (Acts 19: 10.) Paul does

speak of the Colossians as having learned the truth of Epaphras, but whether that was their first hearing of the truth cannot be certainly proved. But that Paul had some contact with people of Colossae previous to this letter is also certain. For instance, he had a friend by the name of Philemon who lived there. (Col. 4: 9; Phil. 1ff.) And it seems that Paul had had some previous communication with the church at Colossae, for he speaks of having given them commandments concerning certain things. (Col. 4: 10.)

## Exposition of the Text

### I. Paul Salutes the Church (Col. 1: 1, 2)

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God.* Paul styles himself as an apostle of, or one sent by, Jesus Christ, but he is careful to mention that his mission has the sanction of God the Father. His appointment by Jesus Christ was in harmony with the will of the Father. This is in keeping with the thought that Jesus never did anything which was contrary to the will of the Father. (John 5: 19ff.; 12: 49, 50.)

*And Timothy our brother.* It will be noticed here that Paul is careful to distinguish between his apostleship and the connection which Timothy sustains to him and the Lord. Timothy is nowhere styled as an apostle or as a successor to any of the apostles. He is referred to as a servant, or as a brother, or as Paul's son in the gospel.

*To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ.* The word saint is from the same family from which we get the words "sanctify" and "sanctification." So a saint is a sanctified person. He is one who is set apart from the world to the service of God and as such is giving himself to the cultivation of a character which is in keeping with his purposes and his relation to the Lord. We will notice again that only those who are in Christ are said to be sanctified. Since we enter into Christ through obedience to the gospel, culminating in the act of baptism, it follows that one who has never been baptized into Christ is not a saint and is not therefore a sanctified person.

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father.* "This Pauline form of greeting combines the Greek and Hebrew, western and eastern, forms of salutation. Grace is the source of all blessing as bestowed by God; and peace, in the large sense of its Hebrew original, of all blessing as experienced by man." We also will notice that the usual phrase, "and the Lord Jesus Christ," is not here included in our text. The King James Version carries the phrase, but the American Standard does not.

II. Paul Commends Their Faith and

### Love (Col. 1: 3-8)

*We give thanks to God.* Paul is careful to designate God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Since the Gnostic heresy was bothering the church at Colossae, this would be particularly in place, as the Gnostics did not believe that Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the Son of God in any way that other human beings are not.

*Having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus.* Faith, if it be New Testament faith, faith in Jesus Christ, is a practical thing. It is something that can be manifested. (James 2: 14-18.) It is something that can be heard about by others who live in distant lands. (Rom. 1: 8.) You will notice that the faith spoken of is faith in Christ. While faith in Christ includes belief of the teachings of Christ, yet the faith is not belief in the *teachings* but in the *person* who did the teaching. It should be noticed also that Paul combines the two words "Christ" and "Jesus" as

the name of the one person who was the object of their faith. Gnostics believed the Christ to be the heavenly being, and Jesus the historical or earthly being; that the Christ came upon Jesus at his baptism and left him before his death. But Paul says that the faith of the Christian is in the person Christ Jesus.

*The love which ye have toward all the saints.* Not only did these people have faith, but they had love, a love which was impartial in that it included all the saints. Love is another of the Christian graces which, if it is acceptable, must be manifested. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to prove their love for the poor saints by giving of their means to relieve the saints of their poverty. (2 Cor. 8: 24.) And the writer of Hebrews suggests that we show love of the brethren and love to strangers by being hospitable. (Heb. 13: 1, 2.)

*Because of the hope which is laid up for you.* This verse is connected with the thanksgiving of verse three. Paul gives thanks because of the hope which is laid up for them in the heavens. And he said that the object of their hope they had heard of before in the word of the truth of the gospel. Since hope is made up of expectation and desire, and we have no right to expect that which we have not been promised, it follows that we can only hope for that which has been promised to us in the gospel of Christ. You will notice also that this hope or reward for which they hoped is laid up in the heavens. Peter says that it is reserved by the power of God in heaven for us. (1 Pet. 1: 4, 5.) This should suggest that Paul did not believe in a millennium here on the earth as the object of the hope of a Christian.

*Bearing fruit and increasing.* These words refer to the word of the truth of the gospel which Paul said had come to the Colossians and even to all the world. Paul could say at this time that the gospel had been preached to every creature under heaven. (Col. 1: 23.) And furthermore, he said that this gospel bears fruit; the fruit of course is the Christian, the child of God. Jesus said the word of God is the seed of the kingdom. When the seed is planted in the soil of the heart, and it bears fruit, that fruit is a child of the kingdom. Not only does it

bear fruit, but it does so increasingly. The fruit increases; it goes on to others; it reforms the lives of those whom it touches, and in this way increases, both in the number it reaches and the degree of effectiveness in which it influences the lives of those who hear and obey it.

*Even as ye learned of Epaphras.* This seems to indicate that the people of Colossae learned the truth of God from Epaphras. Whether it means that they heard the truth first from Epaphras and that he established the church there cannot be certainly known. But at the time Paul was writing the letter, Epaphras was a teacher in the church at Colossae. Furthermore, Paul refers to Epaphras as a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf. Some scholars think that this proves that Epaphras first preached the gospel in Colossae and that he did it as a disciple or helper of the apostle. It is their contention that Epaphras went from Colossae to Ephesus, where Paul lived and was teaching, that Epaphras learned the truth and how to preach the gospel from Paul, and that he was sent out by Paul to his home town to preach the gospel. And so Paul speaks of Epaphras as a faithful minister of Christ in our behalf.

III. Paul Prays for the Church (Col. 1: 9-12)

*Do not cease to pray and make request for you.* Paul says that from the time he heard of their faith and love and the increasing of the word among them he had continually prayed for them. Coupling this with verse three, we have the picture of Paul's attitude toward and his prayers for the churches in which he was interested. Prayer was a great part of Paul's life, and we today undoubtedly fail to engage as often and as long in prayers one for another and for the things in which we are interested as Paul and others of New Testament times did.

*That ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will.* Paul was praying that the people of the church in Colossae might be filled with the knowledge of God's will, the whole of God's revealed word. And he wished, too, that they would have spiritual wisdom and understanding. Spiritual wisdom is that wisdom which comes through the Spirit. Being bothered with Gnostic teaching,

they would be inclined to desire that type of knowledge which the Gnostics claimed was available only to those initiated into such society, but Paul is praying that these people would be filled with spiritual knowledge that would come through revelation of the Holy Spirit. This indicates that the best fortification that one can have against false doctrine is a full and complete understanding of the will of God as revealed by the Holy Spirit and preserved for us in the book we call the Bible.

To *walk worthily of the Lord*. This is the result of being filled with the knowledge of his will. Those who have little or no knowledge of the word of God cannot walk worthily of God. Then Paul adds the phrase, "unto all pleasing." This simply suggests that one must walk worthily of the Lord to be pleasing to the Lord, but since no one can walk worthily unless he is filled with the knowledge of God's will, it follows that no one can be pleasing to the Lord without being filled with a knowledge of his will. Hence, the importance of studying the Bible continually and diligently that we may be filled with a knowledge of his will, and being filled with that knowledge, may walk worthily of the Lord in such degree as to be pleasing unto the Lord.

*Bearing fruit in every good work*. This is one way to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing. The individual is not to be simply a harmless person, doing nobody any injury, but is to be a positive character doing good in every way possible. The one talent man (Matt. 25: 26ff.) was a harmless man so far as we know, but he refused to accept responsibility to do anything for his master. So the apostle suggests here that the individual who is filled with the knowledge of God's will and walks worthily of the Lord so as to please God will bear fruit in every good work.

*Increasing in the knowledge of God*. This does not necessarily mean that we are to come to know more and more, although that is a truth, but that is the meaning of the statement in verse nine when Paul prayed that they would be filled with the knowledge of God's will. But this statement *increasing in the knowledge of God* places the emphasis on

the growth and development of the individual by means of the knowledge of which he is filled. A knowledge of the goodness of God will lead the individual to increase more and more in goodness. A knowledge of the love and patience, and kindness of God will lead the individual to grow and increase in these qualities. And so the apostle is praying that the individual who is already filled with the knowledge of God's word may be active under the wisdom of that knowledge so as to walk worthily of the Lord and will show this filling of the knowledge by bearing fruit in every good work and by growing in all those qualities which go to make the individual like his Lord.

*Strengthened with all power*. This is another item of Paul's prayer. He was praying not only that they may be filled with the knowledge of God's word, but that they may be strengthened with all power. Paul prayed that the Ephesians might be "strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man." (Eph. 3: 16.) Since the Spirit uses the word as the instrument through which he accomplishes our growth and our sanctification, it follows that the Holy Spirit is limited in his work by that amount of knowledge of God's word we possess. This does not mean that the Holy Spirit is limited in others by our knowledge, but that he is limited in his work of sanctification in our own hearts by the degree of knowledge of God's word which we possess.

*According to the might of his glory*. The preceding phrase indicates the mode of our strengthening, while this indicates the measure in which we are strengthened. We are strengthened not according as we deserve, but according to the might of God's glory.

*Unto all patience and longsuffering with joy*. This phrase indicates the end or purpose of the strengthening. We are to be strengthened with the power of God according to the might of his glory so that we may be patient, or steadfast, and longsuffering and that we may do our work with joy and not with grief or contention or complaining.

*Giving thanks unto the Father*. Paul ends his prayer by thanksgiving to God who made us meet, or fit, to

be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. The inheritance is eternal life in heaven; and Paul teaches us that it is God who, working in us both to will and work for his good pleasure, made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance. No man can of his own strength and wisdom be fit or make himself fit for

this inheritance. Only God working in us and through us can make us fit for this inheritance. Certainly God cannot do that by himself without our cooperation and against our will, but nevertheless, Paul puts the emphasis in this place on God's part of that work and views God as making us fit for that inheritance.

### Lessons to Learn

1. We should strive to show such faith and cultivate such love as can be heard of over a wide area. Our principle aim should not be simply to be known over an area for our faith and love, but that this faith and love may be so manifested as to honor the Lord and to help our fellow man.

2. We should strive to be filled with the knowledge of God's will. Since no one can walk worthily of

the Lord without a knowledge of his will, and since no one can please the Lord without walking worthy of the Lord, it follows that we should make every effort possible to fill ourselves with a knowledge of his word that we may be pleasing to him.

3. We should be thankful to God for making us fit for the inheritance of the saints in light and should cooperate fully with him to do our part to become fit for that inheritance.

### 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 special knowledge did the Gnostics claim?

What was their belief concerning matter and spirit?

What peculiar belief did the Gnostics hold with reference to Jesus Christ?

What was the belief of Gnostics with reference to guilt for sin?

What lessons are suggested in the terms "Son of man" and "Son of God"?

Can you contrast the Christian faith in Jesus as the atonement for sin with the idea held by the Gnostics?

What is meant by receiving Jesus as our prophet, priest, and king?

State and discuss three things essential to a scriptural walk with Christ?

#### Introduction

Did Paul establish the church at Colossae?

If Paul did not establish the church, to whom may we look for its establishment?

Can you name a friend of Paul who lived in Colossae?

What evidence do we have that Paul had had previous communication with the church at Colossae?

#### Paul Salutes the Church

By whom was Paul made an apostle?  
In harmony with whose will was this appointment made?

What fellow-laborer joined Paul in the writing of this epistle?

What is the meaning of the word *sanctify*?  
What is included in the process of sanctification?

What is the Pauline form of greeting here?  
How does it differ from that in other epistles?

What is the meaning of grace and of peace?

Paul Commends Their Faith and Love  
Why was Paul careful to designate God as the Father of Jesus Christ?

What is there about faith which is of a

practical nature?

Was their faith in Christ or in the teaching of Christ?

Why did Paul combine the two words "Christ" and "Jesus" as the name of one person and the object of their faith?

What indicated the impartiality of the love of the Colossians?

How did Paul exhort people to prove their love for the saints?

Of what is hope composed?

What did Paul say of the hope of the church at Colossae?

What did Paul say about this hope which indicates that he did not accept the theory of the millennium on earth?

To what extent had the gospel been preached?

What was the effect of that gospel in the lives of people?

Discuss the connection which Epaphras had with the church at Colossae and with the apostle Paul.

#### Paul Prays for the Church

What is suggested in our text with reference to Paul's prayer life?

How does Paul's prayer life compare with that of the average church member today?

What kind of knowledge did Paul recommend?

Is this knowledge gained?

Can you prove that one must know the will of God in order to be pleasing to God?

How does the knowledge of God manifest itself in the individual's life?

What is meant by increasing in the knowledge of God?

By what is the Holy Spirit limited in his work of sanctifying us?

What is the purpose of our increase in spiritual strength?

For what did Paul give thanks concerning the church at Colossae?

What is God's part and what is man's part in preparation for the inheritance which awaits us?

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

Lesson X—June 3, 1956

WARNINGS REGARDING ERROR

Lesson Text

Col. 2: 8-12, 16-23

8 Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ:

9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily

10 And in him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power:

11 In whom ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ;

12 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.

16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath day:

17 Which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ's.

18 Let no man rob you of your prize by a voluntary humility and worshipping of the angels, dwelling in the things which he hath seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

19 And not holding fast the Head, from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God.

20 If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye subject yourselves to ordinances,

21 Handle not, nor taste, nor touch (All which things are to perish with the using), after the precepts and doctrines of men?

23 Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body; but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." (1 John 4: 1.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Col. 2: 1-6, 13-15.

Daily Bible Readings

May 28.	M	Wolves in Sheep's Clothing (Matt. 7: 15-23)
May 29.	T	Apostates to Appear (Acts 20: 28-35)
May 30.	W	Spirit Warned of Apostasy (1 Tim. 4: 1-5)
May 31.	T	Deceiving and Being Deceived (2 Tim. 3: 17)
June 1.	F	Itching Ears (2 Tim. 4: 1-8)
June 2.	S	Shipwreck of Faith (1 Tim. 1: 18-20)
June 3.	S	Truth Makes Free (John 8: 31, 32)

TIME.—A.D. 62.

PLACE.—Colossae.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints at Colossae.

Golden Text Explained

1. Prove the spirits, (a) For safety. Paul warned the elders at Ephesus to take heed to themselves unto all the flock because he said grievous wolves would enter in among them, not sparing the flock, and even some of their own number would depart from the faith and speak perverse things to draw disciples after them.

(Acts 20: 28-30.) Paul also said that men who serve as elders or bishops of churches should be able both to exhort in the sound doctrine and to convict the gainsayers because there were many unruly men, vain talkers, and deceivers who had gone out preaching things for filthy lucre's sake and advised that elders

should protect the flock from them. (Tit. 1: 9-11.) (b) Standards by which to measure the prophets. During apostolic days, there were men who had received the gift of discerning spirits (1 Cor. 12: 10), by which gift they were able to determine whether a man was preaching the truth or not. So John may have been exhorting the brethren to try these teachers by the discernment of spirits before they were allowed to teach the congregation. But since we have none thus miraculously qualified, we have another means of determining whether they are teaching the truth. We simply measure them by the truth as revealed in the Bible. Paul said that we should withdraw ourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly "and not after the tradition which they received of us . . . . And if any man obeyeth not our word by this epistle, note that man, that ye have no company with him, to the end that he may be ashamed." (2 Thess. 3: 6, 14.) Paul teaches us not to go beyond that which is written (1 Cor. 4: 6); and John says that if we do go beyond the teaching of Christ we have not God (2 John 9). Since the teaching of Christ is revealed nowhere except in the Bible, it follows that those who go beyond the teaching of Christ as revealed and preserved for us in the Bible have not God and are to be rejected, (c) False teachers are to be silenced. In the passages above quoted, Paul tells us to have no company with such, and John tells us not to receive such into our houses or to give them greetings, "for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works." And Paul says that the mouth of such must be stopped. (Tit. 1: 11.)

2. True teachers are willing to be tested, (a) Jesus submitted to tests. Jesus did not expect people to receive his teaching without sufficient proof to substantiate it. "But no fewer than six different lines did he suggest on which the proof of his claims might be tried. (1) His character. (John 8: 46.) (2) His works. (John 14: 10, 11.) (3) Prophecy. (Luke 24: 27.) (4) Testimony. (John 8: 17, 18.) (5) His resurrection. (John 2: 19.) (6) The promise of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1: 4.)" (b) Paul was willing to be tested when the Judaizers at Antioch called Paul's teaching in question, Paul agreed to

go to Jerusalem to lay the gospel that he preached before the other apostles, elders, and brethren living there. (Gal. 2: Iff.; Acts 15: Iff.) (c) Teachers are to be tried by churches. Our text says that brethren are to try these spirits or prophets who come among them. This is admonition to the church, composed of all its members, to try the teachers who will teach them the doctrines of Christ. This is absolutely contrary to the practices of the Roman Catholic Church. That Church has its teachers, beginning at the head with the Pope and on down to the priests, and they are absolutely free from any jurisdiction of the church. They determine the teaching, and the church must receive it; the church has no right to try them to see whether they teach the truth or not.

3. False prophets are many, (a) False prophets predicted. Jesus said there would be many false prophets. (Matt. 24: 11.) Paul predicted that false prophets would arise and lead people astray. (Acts 20: 29, 30.) And again, he predicted that people having itching ears would heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts and be turned away from the truth and turned to fables. (2 Tim. 4: 3, 4.) And Peter also predicted there would be many false prophets, denying even the Master that brought them. (2 Pet. 2: Iff.) False prophets are ministers of Satan. Paul says that Satan fashions himself after an angel of light, so we need not be surprised if his ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness. (2 Cor. 11: 13-15.) (c) The doom of false prophets. The student should read the second chapter of Second Peter and the Epistle of Jude as these enlarge upon the destruction which shall come to false teachers. In these chapters, we learn that false teachers bring upon themselves destruction; and their destruction slumbereth not; and the Lord knows how to keep unrighteousness under punishment until the day of judgment. And again, he says the blackness of darkness hath been reserved for them forever. And then Jude says that these, like creatures without reason, are to be destroyed, and he said it is such for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved forever, and that the Lord will come to execute judgment upon all such.

## Introduction

Paul showed his concern for the church at Colossae in at least two ways. First, he said that he preached Christ, "admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ; whereunto I labor also, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily." (Col. 1: 28, 29.) Notice the emphasis which is placed upon "every man" in this passage. Paul was not willing to skip here and there, but was anxious to reach every man with the gospel, teach every man how he

should live and how he should worship God, and so bring every man to perfection in Christ Jesus that he might be saved. Next, Paul said he was anxious for the church to know how greatly he was striving for them that their hearts might be comforted, knitted together in love, and that they all might know the mystery of God, even Christ, and that they might not be deluded with the persuasiveness of speech of those false teachers who had no genuine love for them, nor concern for their eternal welfare. (Col. 2: 1-5.)

## Exposition of the Text

### I. Paul Warns Against False Philosophies (Col. 2: 8-12)

*Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you.* The word "spoil" here is used in the sense of that which is taken in battle. Paul did not wish these brethren to be taken captive by these false teachers and so become their spoil or plunder. He was anxious lest the vain philosophies of these false teachers should lead these Christians astray or into spiritual captivity. Systems of philosophy were generally held in high esteem, and those of the Greek especially were smooth, plausible, and convincing when handled by one of considerable ability. Since many of the fundamental principles of Christianity must be accepted by faith, these systems of philosophy which were in harmony with human reasoning appealed to people as being more acceptable. And in our day there are systems of science and philosophy which appeal to human reason with greater force than some of the doctrines of the Bible, because the former are in harmony with human reasoning while the latter must be accepted by faith. But Paul characterizes these philosophies as "the traditions of men" and "the rudiments of the world" which are not after Christ.

*For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.* This is one of the strongest statements of the divinity of Jesus Christ. It is not said that a part of the attributes of God dwells in Christ, but that all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him. "The meaning is that it was not any one attribute of the Deity

that became incarnate in the Saviour; that he was not merely endowed with the knowledge, or the power, or the wisdom of God, but that the whole Deity thus became incarnate, and appeared in human form." (Barnes.) This strikes a death blow at two principles of Gnosticism: (a) that the true God, Deity itself, did not dwell in Jesus, but that the Christ, a being somewhere between deity and humanity, took up its abode in Jesus at his baptism and departed at his death; (b) that the body, being material flesh, is essentially evil and an unfit dwelling place for deity.

*And in him ye are made full.* This word "full" may be taken in the sense of complete. In Christ we are completely furnished with all spiritual needs. If mankind is ignorant and stumbling in the darkness of unbelief, he can find wisdom and knowledge in Jesus Christ which will be sufficient light to guide him in the ways of wisdom. If man is an enemy of God, he finds in Jesus Christ an atonement to reconcile him unto the Father. If man is polluted by sin, he finds in the blood of Christ the power to cleanse him from every sin. And if man is unable to approach God, he finds in Jesus Christ a priest, an advocate, and a mediator, providing a way of approach unto God. If a man is weak, he will find in Jesus the strength he needs to fight the battles of life and win the victory. If a man is discouraged and hopeless, he will find in Jesus Christ the hope and the assurance he needs to comfort him in this life and to bring him finally into the home of the soul.

*In whom ye were also circumcised.*

This circumcision is that performed by Christ, the putting off of sin through forgiveness which is obtained on condition of our baptism. Macknight paraphrases these verses as follows: "Ye have received a more excellent circumcision from Christ, *by whom also ye have been circumcised with the circumcision made without the hands of men; namely, the circumcision of the heart made by the putting off of the body of the sins of flesh, even by the circumcision which Christ requires.* This appears from your *being buried with him in baptism*, as persons whose old man has been crucified with him: *in which baptism also*, that it might be a complete emblem of your circumcision, *ye have been raised with him out of the water*, as persons made spiritually alive, *through your belief of the strong working of God, who raised him from the dead.*"

## II. Paul Warns Against False Worship (Col. 2: 16-19)

*Let no man therefore, judge you in meat.* In verses fourteen and fifteen, Paul had shown that the law of Moses, which he called "the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us," Jesus had taken out of the way when he was crucified. Furthermore, he says that Jesus despoiled the principalities and the powers and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his death. So, since he had taken the law out of our way in his death, no man was to be any longer judged with reference to meat or drink or in respect to the feast days, or a new moon, or the sabbath day. Under the law of Moses, certain meats were unclean and no one was allowed to eat them; certain feast days were to be observed, and the sabbath day was to be observed strictly. The term "feast day" refers to annual celebrations, the "new moon" refers to monthly, and "sabbath day" refers to weekly celebrations. So the annual, monthly and weekly feast days and rest days of the Jews are no longer to be observed. Barnes makes the mistake of all Sabbatarians in saying that all the rest days and feast days were included in the words sabbath days. He argues that if Paul had said the *sabbath day*, singular, he would have referred to the sabbath of the fourth commandment; but that since he

said *sabbath days*, he reasons that the seventh day of the week was not included. In the first place, he should have known that there is no Greek word for our word "day" in the King James Version. In the next place, he should have known that the feasts and new moons took care of the annual and monthly days of rest. And in the third place, he should have known that, though the word sabbath is in the plural, it refers to the weekly sabbath. "The sabbath is placed on the same footing as the others, and Paul therefore commits himself to the principle that a Christian is not to be censured for its non-observance. *Sabbatoon*, though plural in form, means a single sabbath day." (Expositors Greek Testament.)

*Voluntary humility and worshiping of the angels.* Paul warns that we should let no man rob us of our prize, that is eternal life in heaven, by voluntary humility and worshiping of angels. Voluntary humility implies that the humility was not natural but forced. These teachers put on an air or appearance of unusual humility in their teaching. With reference to the meaning of "worshipping of the angels," there are two interpretations. Macknight, with others, says that it means that these Gnostic teachers advocated that people should worship angels because, in a great display of humility, they felt they were unworthy or unfit to worship God. While Barnes and Clarke present the idea as follows: "The whole passage may be paraphrased thus: let no man spoil you of the prize adjusted to you, who delights in mortifying his body, and walking with the apparent modesty of an angel, affecting superior sanctity in order to gain disciples." Barnes asserts that no one ever taught that men should worship angels, but that these teachers affected great humility and the worshipful attitude which characterized angels in the presence of God in order that they might gain more disciples.

*Not holding fast the Head.* Paul charges these teachers with the sin of not holding Christ in proper relation to the universe. They did not hold Christ as the creator of the universe, the preserver of the universe, and the saviour and redeemer of mankind. Hence, Paul would say that they were not holding Christ

as they should, not knowing that it was from him that all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God. By this Paul means that they do not regard Christ as the head of the church, which is the body, and that it is he, through that which he supplies, that gives increase of the body.

### III. Paul Warns Against Ascetic

#### Rules (Col. 2: 20-23)

*If ye died with Christ.* Though Christ was born under the law, when he died, he took the law out of the way and in his resurrection was no longer under the law. Now Paul reasons that if we died with him, we died to the law, and that its ceremonies are no longer binding on us. "But now we have been discharged from the law, having died to that wherein we were held; so that we serve in newness of the spirit, and not in oldness of the letter." (Rom. 7: 6.) The expression "rudiments of the world" to the Jew would refer to the law of Moses, while to the Gentile it might refer to those philosophies and doctrines of men under which they had formerly lived. But the idea is that they have died with Christ to all such laws, they should no longer be bound by them and live as though those laws were still in force. Since your death with Christ and your resurrection to live a new life in him, you now live in Christ, you do not live in the world, a world without Christ, so you should not be subject to the ordinances of that world to which you have died.

*Handle not, nor taste, nor touch.* These are rules which these ascetic philosophers were trying to bind on the church at Colossae. And Paul says that these rules are the precepts

and doctrines of men. It is probable that the words in parentheses, "all which things are to perish with the using," are words expressing a thought which Paul wished to throw in the midst of a statement of false teachers' principles. From this we gather that the law which forbade them to touch, taste, or handle had reference to food and clothing and all material things which man might need for his personal use. These are the things that would perish with the using. This is ascetic doctrine and leads to the most rigorous style of self-denial.

*Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship.* Paul says that this ascetic way of living makes a show of humility and severity to the body. He characterizes this as will-worship, which means worship devised by the human will. This is will-worship contrasted with revealed worship. This is worship which springs from the human will rather than from the divine will revealed through the Holy Spirit.

*But are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.* Though these things make a show of wisdom in will-worship and humility, they are not of any value in curbing the desires of the flesh. Some take literally the teaching of Jesus to cut off the hand that offends or to pluck out the eye that offends. But this would be practicing severity to the body to control and to curb the lust and passions of the body. Paul says that such severity to the body is of no value in curbing the desires of the flesh. Hence, we conclude that Jesus did not intend that his teaching should be taken literally and so mangle the body in order to curb the desires of the flesh.

### Lessons to Learn

1. There is need for warning today lest the philosophers and scientists of our colleges and universities rob our young people of their hope of heaven.

2. Religious people generally need to learn that we are no longer bound by the law of Moses and so do not observe the sabbath, but that we are under the law of Christ and are

to observe such things as he teaches through his apostles.

3. Having died with Christ in baptism, and having been raised with him to walk in newness of life, our manner of life should conform to his life as perfectly as we are able, through the strength which he supplies, to make it.

## 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

Of what did Paul warn the elders at Ephesus?  
What qualifications did Paul say elders should have to care for false teachers?  
What spiritual gift enabled primitive churches to try the truth or falsity of a doctrine?  
By what standard do churches today determine the truth or falsity of a doctrine?  
What instruction are we given with reference to false teachers?  
How may one go beyond the teaching of Christ?  
What is the consequence thereof?  
State and discuss as time permits six different tests to which Jesus submitted his teaching.  
How was the teaching of Paul tested?  
How does the idea of the church's testing its teachers harmonize with the practice of the Roman Catholic Church?  
What predictions were made with reference to false prophets?  
Whom do teachers of error serve?  
What is the doom of false teachers?

### Introduction

How did Paul show his concern for the church at Colossae?  
How does Paul emphasize his interest in each individual?  
To what end was Paul striving for the church at Colossae?  
To whom does Paul refer as the mystery of God?

Paul Warns Against False Philosophies  
What is meant by the word "spoil" in our text?  
Why was Paul anxious about the safety of the brethren at Colossae?  
What is meant by the fullness of the Godhead dwelling bodily in Jesus?  
What two principles of Gnosticism are destroyed by this statement of truth?  
Can you explain how we are made full in Christ?  
By whom is the Christian circumcised?  
How is this circumcision performed?

### Paul Warns Against False Worship

Why are we no longer to be judged by things written in the law?  
What proof do we have here that the Jewish weekly sabbath is no longer binding?  
What is the prize of which one may be robbed?  
What is meant by voluntary humility?  
What is meant by worshiping of angels?  
In what ways did the Gnostics fail to hold Christ properly?

### Paul Warns Against Ascetic Rules

How do we die to the law?  
What is the consequence of this death?  
What were some of the rules of the aesthetic philosophers at Colossae?  
What is the difference between will-worship and revealed worship?  
What is said to be of no value against the indulgence of the flesh?  
What light does this throw on the teaching of Jesus about cutting off the hand or plucking out the eye that offends?  
What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

## Lesson XI—June 10, 1956

## THINGS TO PUT OFF AND TO PUT ON

### Lesson Text

5 Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry;

6 For which things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience:

7 Wherein ye also once walked, when ye lived in these things;

8 But now do ye also put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth:

9 Lie not one to another; seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings,

10 And have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge

Col. 3: 5-17

after the image of him that created him:

11 Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scyth'-i-an, bondman, freeman: but Christ is all, and in all.

12 Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering;

13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye:

14 And above all these things *put on* love, which is the bond of perfectness.

15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which also ye were called in one body; and be ye thankful.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with

psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God.

17 And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Je'-sus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth" (Eph. 4: 24.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Col. 3: 1-4; 4: 2-16.

### Daily Bible Readings

June 4.	M	Put to Death Deeds of Body (Rom. 8: 12-17)
June 5.	T	Crucified with Christ (Gal. 2: 21, 22)
June 6.	W	Buried with Christ (Col. 2: 12-15)
June 7.	T	Raised with Christ (Rom. 6: 14)
June 8.	F	Inward Man Renewed (2 Cor. 4: 10-18)
June 9.	S	Things to Put Away (Eph. 4: 25-32)
June 10.	S	Old Man Corrupt (Eph. 4: 17-24)

TIME.—A. D. 62.

PLACE.—Colossae.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints at Colossae.

### Golden Text Explained

1. Put on the new man. (a) What is the new man? We do not become new in the sense of any physical change, nor in the sense of any change in our mental structure. But we do become new in that we have new purposes; whereas it was once our purpose to satisfy our own desires and passions, it is now our purpose to serve, honor, and glorify God. Whereas our desires were once motivated by the flesh, they are now determined by the will of the Lord. Our motives are different in that they are pure and noble; our attitudes are different from the attitudes before conversion in that our action, feeling, or mood is determined by the principles of Jesus Christ and not by our own selfish desires and inclinations. And our disposition is tempered and sweetened by the teaching and example of Jesus Christ instead of being determined by outward circumstances and the desires of our hearts as was in the case before conversion, (b) This is an act for which we are responsible. Paul exhorts us to put on the new man. This is not something which God does for us or to us, but it is our own act. Certainly we are given the strength by the Lord and our minds are so disposed by the teaching of the Lord, yet there is an element of our own decision

and activity involved. (c) Putting off the old man is essential before one can put on the new man. The old man is the old manner of life with the purposes and desires, motives, attitudes, and disposition. These things must be put off, renounced, turned away from in order that we may put on the new man.

2. Created in God's likeness, (a) In what sense created? From man's point of view, conversion is a putting off of the old manner of life and a putting on of the new manner of life. But from God's point of view, our conversion is a creation. Paul said, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature." (2 Cor. 5: 17.) Again, Paul says that we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus. (Eph. 2: 10.) And Paul tells us that the power which God exerted in us is "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 we conclude that there is an exertion of divine power in the conversion of the sinner. As there was an exertion of omnipotence in the creation of the material universe, so there must be ex-

ertion of divine power, omnipotence, in the creation of the new man. But here many religious teachers have failed to see the truth in the manner in which this divine power is exerted. Bare omnipotence did not bring the universe into existence. We are told that God spoke and things were created. "By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God." (Heb. 11: 3a.) And in the creation of the new man in our conversion, omnipotence is channeled through the word of God. Paul says the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. (Romans 1: 16.) So the new creature in Christ Jesus is the result of the exertion of divine power channeled through God's word, the gospel, (b) In what sense like God? When God created man, he gave him at least four qualities which the lower creation did not receive and which constituted man in the image of God. (1) Intelligence, including self-consciousness. (2) The power of rational affection. This is greater than sentiment or instinct or passion. It is that love which man has which distinguishes him from the brute creation. (3) Free will. Man is a free being; God is perfectly free and the only being in the universe who is absolutely free. Man's freedom is limited, but real nonetheless. (4) Moral sense or conscience. Man has an innate sense of right and wrong. True, he must be taught what is right and what is wrong, but even without this teaching he has some sense that there is a right and wrong way to live. These qualities in man were

to be exercised in righteousness and holiness, but when man sinned he ceased to exercise these qualities in righteousness and holiness, and the image of God was marred. In conversion this image is restored, and man again is enabled to exercise these qualities in righteousness and holiness, (c) For what purpose created? Paul says that we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God afore prepared that we should walk in them. (Eph. 2: 10.)

3. Outstanding characteristics, (a) Righteousness. When the word "righteousness" is used in connection with "holiness" or "godliness," its meaning is usually limited to man's relationship with his fellow man. Righteousness then consists in doing right by his fellow man. (b) Holiness. This word suggests man's relationship to God. It means to be pure, without defilement, and suggests that in order for a man to be in union with God he must be holy, (c) Truth. Our text says the new creature has been created in righteousness and holiness of truth. Whether the phrase "of truth" modifies righteousness as well as it does holiness is a difficult question, but its meaning can be applied as easily to one as to the other. It may mean the righteousness and holiness which are dictated by the truth, or it may mean that the holiness and righteousness are to be sincere and genuine. This writer prefers the latter interpretation.

### Introduction

The putting off of the old man and the putting on of the new man are practical results of our conversion to the Lord. In our baptism, we are baptized into death to sin. And in our baptism we are raised to walk in the newness of life. Paul says, "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Col. 3: 1-3.) Notice that Paul conditions our seeking the

things that are above and setting the mind on such things on the fact that we have been raised together with Christ. Those who have never been buried by baptism into death to sin might well be expected to continue to live in sin, but those who have both died to sin and have been raised to walk in the newness of life may logically be expected to put off that old manner of life and put on the new manner of life which is consistent with his new relationship in which his motives, purposes, and desires are governed by the will of the Lord.

## Exposition of the Text

### I. Things to Put Off (Col. 3: 5-9)

*Put to death therefore your members.* The word "members" refers to the members of our body being part of the flesh in which sin operates. Paul speaks of sinful passion working in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. (Rom. 7: 5.) And again he says that there was a different law in his members warring against the law of his mind, bringing him into captivity under the law of sin which was in his members. (Rom. 7: 23.) Again he exhorts us not to let sin reign in our mortal body nor present our members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness. (Rom. 6: 12, 13.) In all these verses the word "members" means a portion of our fleshly bodies, and in our text these members are said to be "upon the earth," which simply means the earthly members. To put these members to death is to control them in such way as to render them insensible to the sinful passions which desire to work through them. Paul elsewhere expresses this as crucifying the flesh with the passions and lusts thereof. (Gal. 5: 24.)

*Fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desires, and covetousness.* These are the sins which have their seat in and work through the various members of the body. Fornication is used here as a specific term and refers to what is commonly known as immorality, while uncleanness is a general term and includes all forms of moral filth and degradation. The word "passion" is not always used in a bad sense, but it is so used here and means a morbid, inflamed condition of the sensual appetites. Instead of the word "passion," MacKnight uses "unnatural lusts" and gives Rom. 1: 26, 27 as an example. Of evil desires he says, "Under this appellation, immoderate desire of every kind is forbidden; and more especially the immoderate desires of the pleasures of the table which lead men to gluttony and drunkenness."

*Covetousness, which is idolatry.* We call attention again to the fact that covetousness keeps the very worst kind of company, being mentioned along with fornication, passion, and evil desires. Next, Paul says that covetousness is idolatry. The Greek word used here has a wider meaning than our word, denoting a

disposition to have more at any cost, a grasping greed and selfishness grown to a passion. And since it so captivates the heart and controls the life of an individual, these desires take the place of God in the heart of one, and for this reason it is idolatry.

*Cometh the wrath of God.* Paul says that it is for the sake of such things as these that the wrath of God comes upon disobedient children. First, we suggest that God will pour out his wrath upon the disobedient. The fact that God destroyed the world by a flood, that he destroyed Sodom by fire and brimstone, and that he punished the children of Israel on account of their sins should be sufficient proof that God will punish the disobedient. Further, Paul positively teaches that God will pour out his wrath upon the disobedient. (Rom. 2: 3-10.) And John describes the place of the punishment of the wicked. (Rev. 20: 11-14; 21: 8.) And Jesus himself says that the wicked will be punished with everlasting punishment. (Matt. 25: 41-46; Mark 9: 45-49.)

*When ye lived in these things.* Notice that Paul says that many of us walked after this course of life when we lived in these things. Notice also that one can live in fornication; one can live in uncleanness; one can live in covetousness.

*Also put them all away.* The apostle now deals with a slightly different type of sin. These are sins of words and of attitude. He condemns anger, wrath, malice as sinful dispositions of the mind. Then he condemns railing, shameful speaking, and lying one to another and says that these are to be put away as not being in harmony with the new relationship into which we have come by being baptized into Christ. These things were entirely in harmony with the old man which Christians have put off, but they are entirely out of harmony with the new man which we are to put on.

*Ye have put off the old man.* The Greek word translated "put off" has two prepositional prefixes, and each one of them has its own meaning. The first one means "away from"; the second, means "out of." So one has not put off the old man until he has

both got "out of" and "away from" the old manner of life, and the further one gets away from that old manner of life the safer will he be amidst the temptations of life.

## II. Things to Put On (Col. 3: 10-14)

*That is being renewed unto knowledge.* Paul says that these brethren had not only put off the old manner of life with his doings which are described above, but that they have put on the new man or manner of life which is consistent with the example of Jesus Christ. It should be noted that the idea of putting on the new man is expressed by a verb in the past tense, but that the renewal unto knowledge is expressed by a verb in the present tense. This suggests that the process of renewal is going on all the time. And the renewal is said to be *unto* and not by or according to the knowledge one has. The renewal is unto knowledge. The word which Paul uses for knowledge is not the usual, but a special word which means, according to Thayer, precise and exact knowledge of things ethical and divine. Trench says that this word is used of a deeper and more intimate knowledge and "it is making me better acquainted with the things I knew before; a more exact viewing of an object that I saw before afar off." So Paul is saying that this new man is being renewed unto a deeper and more accurate understanding of the things of which he already had knowledge. There is also the idea of cultivation of appreciation of these things. As we are being renewed unto this knowledge, we are growing into the appreciation of things heavenly and divine. And this growth and development are said to be after the image of him that created him, that is, after the likeness of God as discussed in the golden text. And this likeness, of course, is manifested toward us through Jesus Christ, who was God in the flesh.

*Where there cannot be Greek and Jew.* In this relationship where we are renewed after the image of our creator, that is to say in Christ, there is no distinction based upon race, color, social, or political differences.

*Put on therefore, as God's elect.* Since Paul addressed this letter to the saints and faithful brethren in

Christ, and since he here speaks of them as the elect, it follows that the saints and faithful brethren in Christ are the elect of God. The way one becomes a saint in Christ is the way one becomes elected of God. He also calls them holy and beloved. The word "holy" refers to their characters, and "beloved" the attitude of the Lord toward them. They are to put on a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering. The student should use a good dictionary and acquaint himself with the several meanings and shades of meaning of these words and try seriously to cultivate these qualities in his life.

*And forgiving each other.* It is a Christian trait to be forgiving in our attitude toward those who do us wrong. Paul says that this should be done even as the Lord forgives us. It should be as fully as the Lord forgives us, as freely as the Lord forgives us, and as lasting as the Lord's forgiveness. To forgive one who has wronged us is perhaps one of the most difficult duties we have to perform. The father of the prodigal is a good example of forgiveness, when the prodigal returned, the father put a robe on him, put shoes on his feet, a ring on his finger, and killed the fatted calf. He placed the prodigal right back in the home and in his affections and in the life and activity of the home just as if the prodigal had never left home. This is complete forgiveness and most difficult for us to practice. However, we should strive continually to cultivate the ability to forgive in such manner.

*Above all these things put on love.* According to Paul, love is as a cord which binds all these other qualities together and gives them tone and makes them worth while. Macknight says, "A bond by which all the members of the new man are completed and compacted, as the dress is completed and adjusted when bound around the body with a girdle. By comparing love to the girdle where-with the Easterns bound their robes in a comely manner around their body, the apostle insinuates that love to God and man is the principle which unites all the virtues, and renders them consistent and permanent."

## III. Ruled in All Things by Jesus

Christ (Col. 3: 15-17)

*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.* The peace of Christ is that peace which is effected by his death on the cross and through it reconciliation with God, the peace which the Christian has with God on account of the atoning death of Christ. Paul tells the brethren to allow this peace to rule in their hearts to determine their future course in life, rather than to allow these philosophers and teachers of the traditions of men and the rudiments of the world to determine their course in life. Next Paul reminds them that it was to the enjoyment of this peace that they were called, and for which they should be thankful. A statement elsewhere from Paul will throw light on both the election and the calling of our text. "For that God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. 2: 13, 14.)

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.* The word of Christ is the teaching or doctrine of Christ as spoken by him and as revealed by him through his apostles. This is to dwell in our hearts. David said that he laid up the word of God in his heart that he might not sin against God. (Psalm 119: 11.) Here Paul admonishes us to lay up the word of Christ in our hearts and certainly for the purpose of strengthening us in time of temptation, and warning us against dangers, and encouraging us when we are faint and depressed, and directing us in all our work and worship.

*In all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another.* The American Standard Version punctuates this sentence differently from the King James. According to our text, wisdom modifies the teaching and admonishing one another. We are to let the word of Christ dwell in us so that we may teach and admonish, and it will direct us so that we will do the teaching and admonishing in

**Lessons to Learn**

1. The teaching of Christ regulates our thoughts, words, and deeds, and it tends to purify, ennoble, and make

a wise manner. Furthermore, Paul says that we are to use psalms and hymns and spiritual songs in our teaching, and certainly he does not mean that all our teaching is to be done in psalms, hymns, and songs. The teaching which he was doing in this letter was not so done, so it would be foolish to conclude that all our teaching should be so done. However, we may and should use psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs as avenues, through which to teach and admonish one another. Further, it is implied that we should sing such psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs as will teach and admonish. Those that have little or no meaning should be refused. Some think that the psalms refer to those of the Old Testament, that hymns refer to songs of praise to God, and that spiritual songs refer to any type of song which is of a spiritual nature. However, one standard authority says that, "the precise distinctions intended are not certain, and perhaps they should not be sharply drawn." Others, in an effort to justify the use of mechanical instruments, have said that a psalm is a musical composition accompanied with an instrument, while hymns and spiritual songs are musical compositions unaccompanied. This is foolish on the face of it because the use or non-use of mechanical instruments cannot determine the nature of a musical composition, nor is a psalm of such nature that it cannot be sung without an instrument.

*Whatsoever, ye do, in word or in deed.* Paul lays down a general rule that all which we do in our work and worship is to be done in the name of the Lord. To do a thing in the name of the Lord is to do it by the authority of the Lord. The Lord authorizes us to do things through his word. Therefore, that which the Lord teaches us in the word to do, we are authorized to do; and that which the Lord does not teach us in his word to do, we have no authority for doing. And to do a thing for which we have no authority is unlawful, and to place ourselves in the position of making our own laws or walking after our own will.

useful all that we think, say, and do.

2. The problem of the average person is to make up his mind to turn

loose of the world and determine to become as much like Jesus as possible. The average person would like to hold on to as much of the world as possible and still be sure to go to heaven.

3. The songs we sing unconsciously open the doors of our hearts and let the world look in. The unconscious overflow is a sample of what fills the heart.

### 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

In what sense is the Christian a new man?  
How does Paul emphasize the responsibility of the individual in becoming a new man?  
What is the "old man" and what is to be done with him?  
In what sense is the new man a work of creation?  
How does Paul describe the power which God exerts in creation?  
What place did God's word have in the creation of the material universe?  
What place does God's word have in the creation of the new man in Christ?  
Name and discuss four qualities in man which make him in the image of God.  
Why is there a need for creating man anew in the image of God?  
For what purpose are we created in Christ Jesus?  
What is the meaning of righteousness, a holiness, a truth as used in our text?

#### Introduction

When do we become dead to sin and alive to God?  
Who is obligated to set his mind on things above?  
Why cannot the baptized believer consistently live in sin?

#### Things to Put Off

What is the meaning of the word *members* in this verse?  
What is meant by putting our members to death?  
Why are the sins of verse five referred to as our members?  
Why is covetousness referred to as idolatry?  
What is the consequence of sin mentioned in this text?  
What proof do we have that God will punish the disobedient?

Does Paul affirm that one can live in fornication or in covetousness?  
Name and discuss as time permits other sins mentioned in this text which we are to put away.  
What is included in putting off the old man?

#### Things to Put On

What does Paul say is being done to the new man?  
What is meant by renewal unto knowledge?  
After whose likeness is the new man being renewed?  
In Christ what becomes of racial, social, and political distinction?  
Who are the elect and how did they become such?  
What is the meaning of the words *holy* and *beloved* in this text?  
Discuss the characteristics which Christians are to put on.  
What is forgiveness?  
To what extent are we to forgive those who do us wrong?  
What place does love occupy in the Christian character?  
How is love related to these other qualities mentioned in this text?

#### Ruled in All Things by Jesus Christ

What is the peace of Christ?  
What should we allow it to do for us?  
What is the word of Christ in our text?  
How may it dwell richly in us?  
What duty does this text lay upon us with reference to one another?  
What does our text teach us about singing?  
Can you distinguish between psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs?  
Is the use of mechanical instruments of music demanded by the use of the word "psalms"?  
What general rule does Paul lay down with reference to our worship?  
What is meant by doing our work and worship in the name of the Lord?  
What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson XII—June 17, 1956

PERSONAL GREETINGS TO THE COLOSSIANS

Lesson Text

Col. 4: 7-18

7 All my affairs shall Tych'-i-cus make known unto you, the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord:

8 Whom I have sent unto you for this very purpose, that ye may know our state, and that he may comfort your hearts;

9 Together with O-nes'-i-mus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things that *are done* here.

10 Ar-is-tar'-chus my fellow-prisoner saluteth, you, and Mark, the cousin of Bar'-na-bas (touching whom ye received commandments; if he come unto you, receive him),

11 And Je'-sus that is called Jus-tus, who are of the circumcision: these only *are my* fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, men that have been a comfort unto me.

12 Ep'-a-phras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Je'-sus, saluteth

you, always striving for you in his prayers, that ye may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.

13 For I bear him witness, that he hath much labor for you, and for them in La-6d-i-ce'-a, and for them in Hi-e-rap'-6-lis.

14 Luke, the beloved physician, and De'-mas salute you.

15 Salute the brethren that are in La-od-i-ce'-a, and Nym'-phas, and the church that is in their house.

16 And when this epistle hath been read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the La-6d-i-ce'-ans; and that ye also read the epistle from La-6d-i-ce'-a.

17 And say to Ar-hip'-pus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.

18 The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Grace be with you." (Col. 4: 18b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rom. 16: 1-16.

Daily Bible Readings

- June 11. M. . . . . Greetings to Priscilla and Aquila (Rom. 16: 3)
- June 12. T. . . . . Greetings to Numerous Saints in Rome (Rom. 16: 5-16)
- June 13. W. . . . . Greetings from Brethren (1 Cor. 16: 19-24)
- June 14. T. . . . . Greetings with a Holy Kiss (2 Cor. 13: 12; 1 Pet. 5: 14)
- June 15. F. . . . . Greetings to Those Who Love Us (Titus 3: 12-15)
- June 16. S. . . . . Greetings to an Elect Sister (2 John 12, 13)
- June 17. S. . . . . Greetings to Friends by Name (3 John 13, 14)

TIME.—A.D. 62.

PLACE.—Colossae.

PERSONS.—Paul and the saints at Colossae.

Golden Text Explained

1. Meaning of grace. Everything in this section is taken from Thayer's Greek Lexicon, (a) Sweetness, charm, loveliness; anything that affords joy, pleasure, delight. It is used in this meaning in such passages as Luke 4: 22; Eph. 4: 29; Col. 4: 6. (b) Good will, loving-kindness, favor. Jesus grew in the favor of God. (Luke 2: 52.) The church at Jerusalem had favor with all the people. (Acts 2: 47.) And this use of it applies when masters show kindness to

their servants, (c) New Testament writers use the word preeminently of that kindness by which God bestows favors upon the ill-deserving and grants to sinners the pardon of their offenses and bids them accept eternal salvation through Christ. (Rom. 3: 24; 4: 4, 16; Eph. 2: 5, 8.) (d) It is also used with reference to Christ for leaving his state of blessedness with God in heaven and voluntarily undergoing the hardships and miseries of human life, and by his

suffering and death on the cross to secure salvation for mankind. (Acts 15: 11; 2 Cor. 8: 9; Rom. 5: 15.) (e) It is used of the merciful kindness by which God, exerting his holy influence upon souls, turns them to Christ, keeps, strengthens, increases them in Christian faith, knowledge, affection, and kindles them to the exercise of the Christian virtues. (2 Cor. 4: 15; 6: 1; 2 Thess. 1: 12.)

2. We are indebted to grace for: (a) faith. We are told that Apollos "helped them much that had believed through grace." (Acts 18: 27b.) It was a manifestation of the grace of God that salvation was provided and that a teacher of that salvation was sent to these people, and hence they are said to have believed through the grace of God. (b) We are called by his grace. Paul says our calling was not according to our works "but according to his own purpose and grace." (2 Tim. 1: 9b.) (c) Justification is by grace. (Rom. 3: 24, 25; Tit. 3: 7.) (d) Forgiveness is through grace. (Eph. 1: 7.) (e) Salvation is by grace. First, it is said to be by the grace of Christ. (Acts 15: 11.) And then it is attributed to the grace of God through our faith. (Eph. 2: 5, 8.) (f) Comfort and hope are by grace. Paul directs a prayer to Jesus Christ and

God our Father "who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace." (2 Thess. 2: 16.) (g) All that we are. With the apostle Paul, all of us can say, "But by the grace of God I am what I am." (1 Cor. 15: 10a.) And again, all of us should live as to be able to say with Paul that in holiness and sincerity of God, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we behave ourselves in a becoming way. (2 Cor. 1: 12.)

3. The grace of God is described as: (a) great. "Great grace was upon them all." (Acts 4: 33b.) (b) God's grace is rich. Paul says that we have redemption through the blood of Christ "according to the riches of his grace." (Eph. 1: 7.) And he also says that God has served us, made us sit together with Christ in heavenly places that in ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Eph. 2: 7.) (c) The grace of God is exceeding. (2 Cor. 9: 14.) (d) The grace of God is said to be manifested in many ways. (1 Pet. 4: 10.) (e) God's grace is sufficient for all our needs. (2 Cor. 12: 10.) (f) God's grace is said to be abundant especially where sin abounds. (Rom. 5: 17, 20.)

### Introduction

There is something comforting and refreshing about the personal greetings of the great apostle Paul. He was an ambassador of God, taking the saving gospel to a dying world, and yet he was not forgetful of his friends and those who had helped to make life pleasant for him while in their company. In one breath he could reprove and rebuke, while in the next he could encourage those to whom he wrote and earnestly and fervently wish that all the riches of the grace of God might be manifested toward them. But if it strikes us as unusual that the great apostle

Paul could take time for such homey affairs, we should be all the more struck when we realize that the Holy Spirit inspired Paul as much in reference to these things as he did when Paul was writing about the great and profound principles of the gospel. God through his Holy Spirit is not unmindful of our little feelings of joy and of our needs which we feel keenly, and so we should take comfort that God deals with us individually and that he takes time for our little affairs as well as the great affairs of providing salvation for us.

### Exposition of the Text

I. A Word About Paul's Messenger (Col. 4: 7-9)

*All my affairs shall Tychicus make known unto you.* This helper of Paul is mentioned in five separate scriptures which give us some picture of his relationship with Paul.

(1) In Acts 20: 4, he is spoken of as one of Paul's group along with Trophimus. This reference indicates that he lived in Asia, but at what particular place we do not know, though Ephesus seems most probable. (2) Though Trophimus accompanied

Paul to Jerusalem, there is no mention of Tychicus again until we find him with Paul in Rome. The first mention is in Eph. 5: 21, 22. This is the only personal mention in that letter, perhaps because Tychicus was the bearer of the letter. The statement made to the Ephesians is very similar to that in our text. (3) The next mention made of Tychicus in chronological order is Tit. 3: 12. This book was written after Paul's first imprisonment and during the few months he was at liberty. It was written from somewhere in Asia or Macedonia, and in this Paul suggests that he may send Tychicus to preach where Titus was then located. (4) The last mention of Tychicus is found in 2 Tim. 4: 12, where Paul says that he had sent him to Ephesus. So we see that Tychicus was with the apostle at various times from the time he joined him on his third missionary journey until the time of his death.

*The beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-servant.* Paul refers to Tychicus as a beloved brother. He has had opportunities to observe the faithfulness and loyalty of Tychicus and had found him to be a genuine Christian and brother in the Lord. Not only a brother in the Lord, but Paul found him a faithful minister and fellow servant. Tychicus was the Lord's minister and Paul's fellow servant.

*That ye may know our state.* The brethren where Paul labored so long and so faithfully loved him and were interested in his welfare. When he visited with the brethren of Asia at the close of his third missionary journey, he sorrowfully told them that they would likely see his face no more. (Acts 20: 22-25.) Undoubtedly many of them had heard of his release from the first imprisonment and probably some of them had seen him after his release, but he is now imprisoned a second time, and the matter is more serious. Consequently, they would be very much disturbed as to his condition and very anxious to know of his fate. So he dispatches Tychicus with this letter that, through both his letter and the words of Tychicus, these brethren might be comforted. From what is here said of Tychicus, we gather at least two things as to his character. (a) He was a faithful

and diligent servant of the Lord. He was not the off-and-on, cold-and-hot type, but was faithful in his ministry. (b) He was a warm, affectionate, and sociable type of character. Paul refers to him as the beloved brother, and he also said that Tychicus would comfort the heart of the Colossians with his message. It takes a warm, affectionate type of character to perform such a service.

*With Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother.* Onesimus is the runaway slave of Philemon, who lived at Colossae. And Paul says in this statement concerning Onesimus, "who is one of you." This shows that Onesimus was a resident of Colossae before he decided to leave there and go to Rome. There are two things indicated here about Onesimus. (a) Onesimus was also called a beloved brother, indicating the affection which Paul had for him, and which no doubt Onesimus returned to Paul. (b) This indicates Paul's faith in Onesimus as one who would keep his word. Onesimus had run away from his master and had found Paul in Rome. Likely Onesimus had known Paul in Paul's association with Philemon, but anyway, he was converted by Paul in Rome. And Paul thought it not best to keep Onesimus without the consent of Philemon, hence he asks Onesimus to return to his master. The fact that Paul was willing to send him along with Tychicus, who certainly had no authority over Onesimus, is an indication of Paul's faith in Onesimus that the runaway slave, now a beloved brother in the Lord, would keep his word and return to his master.

## II. Greetings from Paul's Fellow

### Workers (Col. 4: 10-14)

*Aristarchus, my fellow-prisoner.* The first we hear of Aristarchus is his association with Paul in Ephesus and his being seized by the frenzied mob stirred up by Demetrius the silversmith. (Acts 19: 29.) In Acts 20: 4, we learn that Aristarchus was a man of Thessalonica. We also learn in this passage that he was one of Paul's company on the third missionary journey and his travel to Jerusalem. Then in Acts 27: 2, we learn that Aristarchus accompanied Paul on his journey to Rome. He is here in our text styled as Paul's fellow prisoner. How or why he was put in prison is not known. Some

think that he was a fellow prisoner by choice in order that he might serve Paul. In Phile. 23 Epaphras is mentioned as Paul's prisoner, while Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke are styled fellow workers.

*Mark, the cousin of Barnabas.* This is the writer of the gospel record which bears his name. His mother was Mary, a resident of Jerusalem. (Acts 12: 12.) He was intimately associated with Jesus and his apostles, even being near them at the time of the betrayal and arrest of Jesus. (Mark 15: 51, 52.) Being related to Barnabas was likely the cause of his starting with Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary tour, but for some unknown reason he turned back at Perga in Pamphylia. (Acts 13: 5, 13.) And we hear no more of him until Barnabas suggests that Mark be taken on the second missionary journey. Paul objected so strenuously that he and Barnabas parted company, and Barnabas took Mark with him to Cyprus for further work. (Acts 15: 39.) Favorable mention by Paul in this text suggests that Mark had found his way back into the heart and confidence of Paul. But if there be any doubt as to his restoration to the confidence of Paul, all such doubt is removed when we find Mark being mentioned in such favorable light in Paul's imprisonment. "Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is useful to me for ministering." (2 Tim. 4: 11.) Mark is usually looked upon as the disciple and associate of Peter. Peter refers to Mark as his son. (1 Pet. 5: 13b.) Mark was unusually blessed in that he had personal contact with Jesus during his lifetime, and that he was associated with the two most outstanding apostles of the Lord, Peter and Paul.

*Touching whom ye received commandments.* Of what these commandments or directions consisted we have no way of knowing, and how these commandments were communicated to the brethren at Colossae is also unknown. This may be a suggestion of a letter which Paul wrote to them which has not been preserved. This should not be a surprise that a letter written by Paul should not be preserved. We know that he wrote one to the church at Corinth which has not been preserved. (1 Cor. 5: 9ff.) Furthermore, none of the words of Jesus has been

preserved except as is reported through inspired apostles, so if Jesus did not preserve all his sermons as he preached them, it should not be surprising that the Lord would not see fit to preserve all the writings of the apostles.

*Jesus that is called Justus.* This man of whom we know nothing more, along with Aristarchus and Mark, is referred to as being of the circumcision. They were Jews, and Paul refers to them as his fellow workers unto the kingdom of God who had been a comfort to him.

*Epaphras, who is one of you.* We have mentioned this helper of Paul before. He is said to be one of the Colossians. So we conclude that Colossae was his home. He is also referred to here as a servant or slave of Jesus. This word servant is the one which Paul regularly applies to himself; consequently we would conclude that Epaphras stood high in the estimation of Paul as a servant of the Lord. Paul commends him here for his prayer life. He was "always striving for you in his prayers, that ye may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God." The word striving suggests bodily activity. It was common in those days for those who prayed to become so fervent and energetic that they put their physical bodies into their prayers.

*He hath much labor for you.* Paul recommends Epaphras as one who was energetic and untiring in his efforts to do good, and he held in mind those of his home town and districts surrounding, never forgetting to pray for them and to work for their advantage.

### III. Salutations and Benedictions

(Col. 4: 15-18)

*Luke, the beloved physician.* From the change in pronouns in Luke's record, we conclude that Luke joined Paul on his second missionary journey in the city of Troas when Paul left there to go into Macedonia in answer to the call he received in a vision. (Acts 16: 10ff.) Except for a short while when Luke remained in Philippi to take care of the work in that city, he was with the apostle until the time of his death. He is the writer of the gospel record which bears his name, as well as the book of The Acts. He is referred to here as a physician, and the words which he uses in his writings indicates his

knowledge of medicine. Near the end, and when Paul was under the shadows of the Roman chopping block, he wrote this plaintive note: "Only Luke is with me." (2 Tim. 4: 11.) Along with Luke in this text, a fellow worker of Paul named Demas sends his salutation. The last mention we have of Demas is one which puts a question mark on his faithfulness and loyalty. "For Demas forsook me, having loved this present world, and went to Thessalonica." (2 Tim. 4: 10.)

*Salute the brethren that are in Laodicea.* Paul sends this salutation to the Christians in Laodicea. Some thirty years later, we find another letter being addressed to the church at Laodicea. (Rev. 3: 14-22.) In this letter we are informed that the church in Laodicea was lukewarm and proud and impenitent, and was in danger of being lost altogether.

*When this epistle hath been read among you.* Paul suggests that this letter not be read only by the brethren at Colossae, but that it should be taken to Laodicea for the brethren there to read, and furthermore suggests that a letter which the Laodiceans had should be read at Colossae. The mention of this letter to the Laodiceans has caused considerable discussion among Bible scholars. Some think that our letter to the Ephesians was a circular letter, and that a copy of it was also sent to Laodicea and reference is here made to that. But this is mere conjecture and is not to be depended on. We give you the conclusion of Albert Barnes: "The conclusion to which we are conducted is that the reference in Col. 4: 16 is to some epistle of Paul's to the church at Laodicea

which is not now extant, and that the probability is that, having accomplished the object for which it was sent, it has been suffered to be lost. This is to be numbered with the writings of Gad, and Iddo the seer, and Nathan, and the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and the book of Jehu (1 Chron. 19: 29; 2 Chron. 9: 29; 20: 34; 1 Kings 16: 1); works which, having accomplished the object for which they were composed, have been suffered to become extinct."

*Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received.* This is word which Paul tells the brethren to give Archippus. Why this particular individual was singled out among all the others mentioned to be warned to take heed unto his ministry we have no way of knowing. Some have conjectured that Paul had learned that this servant was becoming lax with reference to his duty. Others have thought that the lukewarmness mentioned by John was already noticeable, and that this servant of the church should be more diligent and careful lest this spirit of lukewarmness increase. But each one of us has received a ministry from the Lord, and certainly it is in place that we be warned to take heed to that ministry so that we may fulfill it in such way as to meet the approval of our Lord.

*Remember my bonds.* Paul wished that the brethren would keep in mind that he was in prison because keeping this in mind would make them more diligent in their prayers for him and would cause them to be more careful to use every opportunity they had to minister to his needs.

### Lessons to Learn

1. Paul gives proof in these personal greetings of his interest in his friends and shows his hunger for Christian association.

2. Paul has something good to say of all his fellow workers. He was free from envy and jealousy. Many people today cannot talk about their fellow servants in Christ without casting reflections and insinuations as to the work and sometimes the character of those associated with them in gospel work.

3. Paul encouraged the brethren to read his writings in the assurance that they could each receive a blessing therefrom. The Roman Catholic Church has discouraged the reading of the scriptures by the people generally because they believe that such is dangerous. They claim that the scriptures must be explained by church officials lest harm come from the reading. Paul did not hold this idea; he held that the reading of his epistles by people generally would be for their good.

## 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**  
Give and discuss the several meanings of the Greek word which is translated grace or favor in our text.  
What is the preeminent use of the word by New Testament writers?  
How is the word used in connection with Christ?  
Name and discuss the things for which we are indebted to grace.  
In consideration of these things, can anyone expect to be saved without the grace of God?  
But do these things teach that one is saved by grace only?  
Name and discuss the word used to describe the grace of God.

**Introduction**  
What is there in Paul's epistles which characterizes him as a friendly person?  
Does Paul allow his friendliness to prevent his reproving and rebuking people when necessary?  
What evidence do we have that God is interested in the little details of our everyday life?

**A Word About Paul's Messengers**  
Of what country was Tychicus a citizen?  
What mention is made of Tychicus and Trophimus?  
What mention is made of Tychicus in the letter written to Titus?  
Where did Paul send Tychicus as related in his letter to Timothy?  
What term does Paul use to describe Tychicus?  
What service did Tychicus render both Paul and the church at Colossae?  
What two things do we learn about the character of Tychicus?  
What slave does Paul mention in this letter?

What two things do we learn of this slave from Paul's letter?

### Greetings from Paul's Fellow Workers

To whom does Paul refer as his fellow prisoners?  
Of what city was this man a citizen?  
On what journeys did Aristarchus accompany Paul?  
How were Mark and Barnabas related?  
Who were Mark's mother?  
Where did she live?  
What association had Mark had with Paul before the time of this epistle?  
What evidence do we have that Mark regained the favor of Paul?  
With what other apostle is Mark usually associated?  
Do we have indications that some letters written by apostles have not been preserved?  
What is said of Epaphras which indicates Paul's estimation of him?  
What is indicated with reference to the prayer life of Epaphras?  
What is said of Epaphras which indicates his interest in the church at Colossae?

### Salutations and Benedictions

What mention does Paul make of Luke?  
Where did Luke join Paul's company?  
What statement implies Luke's faithfulness to Paul?  
What suggests the unfaithfulness of Demas?  
With what church did Paul wish the brethren at Colossae to exchange epistles?  
Is this letter to Laodicea to be numbered among others which have not been preserved?  
What word of warning does Paul send Archippus?  
What does Paul request the brethren to remember concerning his condition?  
What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

## Lesson XIII—June 24, 1956

### PAUL'S LETTER TO PHILEMON

#### Lesson Text Phile. 4-19

4 I thank my God always, making mention of thee in my prayers,

5 Hearing of thy love, and of the faith which thou hast toward the Lord Je'-sus, and toward all the saints;

6 That the fellowship of thy faith may become effectual, in the knowledge of every good thing which is in you, unto Christ.

7 For I had much joy and comfort in thy love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through thee, brother.

8 Wherefore, though I have all boldness in Christ to enjoin thee that which is befitting,

9 Yet for love's sake I rather beseech, being such a one as Paul the

aged, and now a prisoner also of Christ Je'-sus:

10 I beseech thee for my child, whom I have begotten in my bonds. O-nus'-i-mus,

11 Who once was unprofitable to thee, but now is profitable to thee and to me:

12 Whom I have sent back to thee in his own person, that is, my very heart:

13 Whom I would fain have kept with me, that in thy behalf he might minister unto me in the bonds of the gospel:

14 But without thy mind I would do nothing; that thy goodness should not be as of necessity, but of free will.

15 For perhaps he was therefore parted *from thee* for a season, that thou shouldest have him for ever;

16 No longer as a servant, but more than a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much rather to thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"I write unto thee, knowing that thou wilt do even beyond what I say."* (Phile. 21.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Phile. 1-3. 22-25.

### Daily Bible Readings

June 18.	M	Salutation (Phile. 1: 1-3)
June 19.	T	Paul's Confidence in Philemon (Phile. 20, 21)
June 20.	W	Paul's Desire to Lodge with Philemon (Phile. 22)
June 21.	T	Greetings to Philemon from Others (Phile. 23-25)
June 22.	F	Duties of Servants to Masters (Eph. 6: 5-8; Col. 3: 22-25)
June 23.	S	Duties of Masters to Servants (Eph. 6: 9; Col. 4: 1)
June 24.	S	Onesimus, Faithful and Beloved (Col. 4: 7-9)

TIME.—A.D. 62.

PLACE.—Colossae.

PERSONS.—Paul, Philemon, and Onesimus.

### Golden Text Explained

1. What our text tells us of Paul. (a) Interest in a slave. Whether Paul became acquainted with Onesimus back in Asia where he knew Philemon, we cannot know definitely. The usual conjecture is that he had known Onesimus, and that when Onesimus went to Rome he intentionally sought out Paul and found him in prison. If Paul knew Onesimus in Asia, we have added proof of his interest in a slave, but if he did not know him back there, we still have proof of his interest in a slave by his effort to convert Onesimus and send him back to his master. Some people are too big or too busy to take time to cultivate the acquaintance of people who are not socially prominent. Paul's only concern was that Onesimus was a creature of the Lord, the offspring of God, and would be useful to the Lord here on earth and could spend eternity in peace and happiness with the Lord. This presented an opportunity to Paul to preach the gospel to one whom Jesus loved enough to suffer on Calvary that his sins might be forgiven. This interest Paul had in men regardless of their social position, (b) Paul's interest in a friend. Paul cultivated the friendship of people, and he regarded highly that friendship and took care to do nothing to lessen or destroy that friendship. So when

17 If then thou countest me a partner, receive him as myself.

18 But if he hath wronged thee at all, or oweth *thee* aught, put that to mine account;

19 I Paul write it with mine own hand, I will repay it: that I say not unto thee that thou owest to me even thine own self besides.

he came in contact with Onesimus in Rome, his first interest was to lead the slave to obey the gospel and become a Christian. His next interest was that of his friend back in Colossae, and so he sought to return this friend's slave to him, thus manifesting his interest in the welfare of his friend, (c) Confidence in his friend. Paul manifests a great deal of confidence in Philemon. His confidence is stated in our text when he says, "Having confidence in thine obedience I write unto thee, knowing that thou wilt do even beyond what I say." First, he says he has confidence in the obedience of Philemon to what he is writing. Second, he says he knows that Philemon will do even more than what he suggests, an expression of the very greatest confidence in his friend. Furthermore, Paul has confidence in the mercy of Philemon to forgive Onesimus the slave and take him back; and in addition to this, Paul has confidence in the kindness of Philemon that he will not mistreat and abuse the slave when he has returned. All this shows an unusual amount of confidence in a friend.

2. What our text tells us of Philemon, (a) He was worthy of Paul's confidence. In verse four Paul speaks of the love and faith which Philemon has in the Lord Jesus, and of his attitude toward all the saints in that

vicinity. Furthermore, he is a man who has had fellowship with Paul and others in good work. In verse twenty-two we learn that Philemon was a prayerful man. Adding all these things together, we get the idea that Philemon was a good man, a man of high moral standards, a man who could be trusted to do right, and one who would respond to the confidence of his friends who expected him to do the right things, (b) From this letter we learn that Philemon was not a stubborn man, but a reasonable man. Paul did not command Philemon to take Onesimus back, nor did he command him to refrain from punishing the slave, but he appealed to him on the basis of Christian principles and motives, (c) Philemon could be trusted to act as a Christian. Paul believed that Philemon would do even more than he was asking of him, and this more was that he would be merciful in his treatment, and that he would be kind in whatever exactions he would make of the slave. And there is a possible hint that Paul suggested he had confidence in Philemon to set free this one who had been his slave.

3. Lessons suggested to us. (a) We should cultivate close friendships, as they may later afford opportunities to do good. If Paul had not cultivated the friendship of Philemon, he

could never have made this appeal for the kindly treatment of a slave; and if Paul became acquainted with Onesimus back in Asia, we have another example of Paul's cultivating a friendship which later afforded him an opportunity to teach a man the truth and lead him to obey the gospel, (b) Our conduct should always be such as to inspire confidence so we may influence others to do right. Here again, Paul's conduct before Philemon was such that he could appeal to Philemon to do that which was unusual and have every confidence that Philemon would do all he asked and even more. If Paul's conduct had not been such as to win the friendship and the respect of Philemon, he would never have been able to make this appeal and secure this kindness for Onesimus. Furthermore, if Paul became acquainted with Onesimus back in Asia, we have another instance of his conduct being such, even before a slave, that when the slave ran away from home he sought out Paul to enjoy his fellowship and company. (c) Paul's interest in a slave gave him the opportunity to save a soul. We ought to cultivate the friendship and the good will of everyone with whom we have any contact, for we never know when these contacts will furnish us with opportunities to teach people the truth.

### Introduction

The fact that Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon the master is not to be taken as proof that Paul believed in and supported the institution of slavery. Paul told slaves that if they had an opportunity to be free they should use that opportunity, but if they had not the opportunity they should not make an issue of their condition. (1 Cor. 7: 20-24.) Furthermore, the instructions which Paul gave masters as to the way they should treat their slaves was such as to practically destroy slavery as it then existed. (Eph. 6: 5-9; 1 Tim. 6: 1, 2.) Slavery was tolerated and closely regulated under the Old Testament. The teaching of Jesus is such as to raise men above slavery.

These reasons have been suggested as probable reasons why the Lord did not under the new covenant forbid slavery: "It was indispensable that men's moral notions should be rectified; that the principles of love and universal brotherhood should be inculcated upon them; that they should discover in the one sacrifice for rich and poor, for bond and free, for men of all colors and climes, that God looks upon them all with equal favor; and not until these ideas were embraced by multitudes, and, in fact, permitted the great mass of society, was it possible that a system so rooted as slavery could be plucked up or even much changed." (M'Clintock and Strong.)

### Exposition of the Text

I. Philemon Commended by Paul

(Phile. 4-7)

*I thank my God always.* Here

again we have an indication of the prayerfulness of the apostle Paul. Not only that, but we are reminded

that he prayed for his friends. Paul was definite and specific in his prayers. Many of our prayers are so general that they are meaningless, but Paul prayed for definite things and definite people. He was thankful upon every remembrance of Philemon and often made mention of him in his prayers.

*Hearing of thy love, and of the faith which thou hast.* Philemon was a man who had love for both the Lord and the saints and faith in Christ. And his love was a practical, active love that was manifested in such a way that people could observe it, take note of it, and talk about it to others. This means that his love manifested itself in definite, practical ways so that people would know of it. Love is like smallpox in one way at least because it breaks out on people; it manifests its presence. One cannot love God without keeping the commandments of God; one cannot love his fellow man without doing good to his fellow man. Next, Philemon's faith was one that showed itself in good works. There is no such thing as having a secret faith which is acceptable to the Lord. Our faith must be confessed; our faith must show itself in good works and faithfulness to God.

*That the fellowship of thy faith may become effectual.* The expression, "fellowship of thy faith," means the fellowship which is inspired or prompted by one's faith, and the fellowship which was prompted by his faith was observed in his deeds of love to God and his deeds to his fellow man. Paul is praying that this fellowship of Philemon's faith might become effectual in bringing others to a knowledge of the truth and to a confession of Christ, and thus to become Christian. He is simply praying here that the faith and love demonstrated by Philemon may work so effectually in those with whom he associates that they may be brought to a knowledge of the truth.

*I had much joy and comfort in thy love.* Paul reminds Philemon of the kindnesses which he has shown in time past. This is a very discreet approach to the matter at hand. Paul is going to make a rather unusual request of Philemon, so he builds up toward that by commending him for all the good that is in him. Paul was not a flatterer, but there were many

good things in the life and character of Philemon, and Paul could call attention to these to build up good will in the heart of Philemon which would incline Philemon to listen to the request he is going to make of him.

*The hearts of the saints have been refreshed through thee.* Not only had Philemon been generous and thoughtful of Paul, but he was wider in his association and in his benefactions than would be indicated by his having done such for Paul. All the saints had enjoyed seasons of refreshing from their association with Philemon and from the blessings which they had received by his goodness and kindness.

## II. Paul's Request in Behalf of Onesimus (Phile. 8-14)

*Though I have all boldness in Christ to enjoin thee.* This boldness in Christ seems to suggest that Paul had the right as an apostle of Christ to tell Philemon, a servant of Christ, what he should do under these circumstances. Paul had no civil right or authority to come between a master and his slave and enjoin or demand that the master take a certain course of action toward his slave; but since Paul was an apostle of Christ, and the relation of a master to a slave is a matter of revelation, it falls within Paul's jurisdiction to tell Philemon what he ought to do with his slave.

*Yet for love's sake I rather beseech.* Paul does not command Philemon, but approaches him through motives of love. He may have done this for two reasons: first, because of the character of Philemon. Many people can be led to do things which they cannot be driven to do. It is entirely possible that Philemon was a character of this type. Furthermore, Philemon being a good man, he would listen to reasoning in the spirit of love, and would not have to be constrained by commandments. In the second place, Paul preferred to use the power of love to that of demand. It was more in keeping with Paul's character, and it was certainly more in keeping with the relationship which existed between Paul and Philemon.

*As Paul the aged, and now a prisoner.* Paul beseeches Philemon on the ground of his age. People will have respect for age and do things at the request of the aged

which they might not do at the request of one younger. Furthermore, Paul beseeches Philemon as a prisoner of the Lord. This suggests that Paul is suffering for the gospel and for the cause of Christ which was dear to the heart of Philemon. And since Paul was suffering for a cause common to both of them, Philemon would feel indebted to him and would therefore be inclined to grant his request.

*I beseech thee for my child.* This is a very tender address. Paul does not say I beseech you for your slave, but he calls Onesimus his child, which he had begotten in his bonds. This is proof that Onesimus had been taught the truth and led to obey the gospel while Paul was in prison. There is something at once both tender and compelling in the pleas of a father for his child, and since Philemon was also a convert of Paul he could understand the relationship between Paul and Onesimus. Having experienced the love and interest of Paul in his own welfare, Philemon would know how deeply interested Paul was in Onesimus and how concerned he was for his welfare.

*Who once was unprofitable to thee.* This period of unprofitableness was during the time between his leaving Philemon and the time of his return. There may be some suggestion of a period of unprofitableness even before his leaving Philemon, but certainly there was a time when the slave was of little profit. But Paul says there has been such a change in this slave that he is profitable both to Philemon and to Paul. Conversion makes a change in people, not only in their attitudes and dispositions, in their hopes and desires, but in the way in which they live and treat their fellow man. When an unprofitable slave was converted to Christ, his conversion made a profitable slave of him. No one can live as the gospel directs him to live without his being profitable to those with whom he is associated. As evidence of the fact that he was profitable to Paul, Paul tells Philemon that he would have been glad to keep Onesimus with him to minister unto him, but that he would not do so without the consent of Philemon.

### III. Reasons for Paul's Request

(Phile. 15-19)

*For perhaps he was therefore parted*

*from thee for a season.* The word *perhaps* suggests a possibility and maybe a probability that Onesimus was parted from Philemon for a little while for the purpose of his conversion. This is an interesting statement. Why did Paul have to say *perhaps*? Why did not inspiration furnish Paul with the information whether or not Onesimus was parted from Philemon for this purpose? We do not have the answer to this; we simply suggest it for your consideration in connection with what inspiration of the Holy Spirit did for apostles. Even though they were inspired, they were not omniscient; they did not know all things.

*No longer as a servant.* This is a part of the statement that perhaps Onesimus was taken from Philemon for a short while that Philemon might have him back forever, and that he should not have him back as a slave but as a brother beloved in Christ. The relationship of master and slave was temporal; it could at best last only until death. But the relationship of a brother in Christ is eternal. They will not be brothers only in this life, but in the life to come if both remain faithful to the Lord. There is a suggestion here of the providence of God in the salvation of a soul. Who can doubt that the providence of God led Philip to preach to the Ethiopian eunuch? None of us doubts that the providence of God led Peter to preach the gospel to Cornelius. And none of us doubts that the providence of God led Paul to Philippi, where he converted Lydia and the jailor and their households. So in this case there is the suggestion that the providence of God led Onesimus to Rome, where he might be reached with the gospel and led to obey his Lord. Paul was the man who could touch the heart of Onesimus and lead him through gospel teaching to obey his Lord. But Paul, being in prison, could not go to Onesimus, so in the providence of God Onesimus was sent to Paul where he learned the truth and became a Christian.

*If then thou countest me a partner.* Paul is basing his plea upon his relationship with Philemon. Certainly Philemon would count Paul a partner with him in the joys and favors of this life and of the blessings and privileges of Christianity. Now Paul

says if you count me to be such a partner in these things as would cause you to receive me, then I beg of you on this ground that you receive my son in the gospel.

*If he hath wronged thee at all, or oweth thee aught.* Of course, Onesimus had wronged Philemon in that he had left him, and during the weeks and perhaps months of his absence Philemon had been deprived of his services. All this constituted a wrong of which Onesimus now, as a Christian, is keenly conscious. Some have conjectured that Onesimus either stole money from Philemon, or had borrowed money as slaves often did and had failed to repay it. All of this is conjecture and unworthy of the time required to attempt to prove or refute it. But the thought is that Paul had such confidence in Onesimus as to be willing to accept his story for the wrong he had done Philemon

and for the amount which he owed him. And Paul was willing to accept that debt as his own. This is proof of the unusual degree of confidence which Paul put in this runaway slave.

*Thou owest to me even thine own self besides.* Paul promises to pay whatever Onesimus owes Philemon, yet he suggests to Philemon that he is so greatly indebted to Paul that it would be impossible for him ever to repay that debt. In this we have the suggestion that Paul had led Philemon to a knowledge of God and thus had put him so far in debt that he could never repay him. Furthermore, regardless of the amount Onesimus owed Philemon, it was insignificant in comparison with the amount which Philemon owed Paul. This suggests to us the value which Paul places upon the service one renders to another when he teaches him the gospel of Christ.

**Lessons to Learn**

1. We should be sure that our faith and love are shown in practical ways, not merely to be seen of men, but to be enjoyed and appreciated by men and rewarded by the Lord.
2. Conversion makes a real, notice-

able, and practical change in the habits of people.

3. God is still interested in people and is still able and willing to send the gospel to those who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

**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**

- In what way did Paul show his love for men regardless of social position?
- How did Paul show his regard for the friendship of Philemon?
- How did Paul show his confidence in Philemon to do what was right?
- State and discuss three things our text tells us about Philemon.
- State and discuss three lessons suggested by our treatment of this text.

**Introduction**

- Does Paul's action in this case prove that he supported the institution of slavery?
- What was Paul's admonition to Christian slaves?
- What instruction did Paul give to Christians who owned slaves?
- What was the attitude of the Lord during the Jewish dispensation toward slavery?
- What are some probable reasons why the Lord did not forbid slavery under the new covenant?

**Philemon Commended by Paul**

- What statement of our text indicates the prayerfulness of Paul?
- What is said of the love which Philemon had for the saints?
- What is said of Philemon's faith?
- What is meant by fellowship of faith?
- What does Paul pray concerning the fellowship of "Philemon's faith?"
- In what does Paul say he had experienced much joy?

What can you say of Paul's approach to Philemon concerning a difficult matter?  
What statement in our text indicates the extent of Philemon's benefactions?

**Paul's Request in Behalf of Onesimus**

- On what ground did Paul have the right to command Philemon in the matter of receiving the slave?
- What was Paul's approach to Philemon? What were his reasons for this approach?
- For what purpose did Paul mention his age and his imprisonment in this epistle?
- What proof do we have that Paul was a prisoner when he converted Onesimus?
- In what sense was Onesimus one time unprofitable to Philemon?
- In what sense is he now profitable?

**Reasons for Paul's Request**

- Was Paul positive in his statement of a reason why Onesimus left Philemon?
- What light does this throw on the inspiration of Paul in matters of this sort?
- What blessing came from this unfortunate experience to both Philemon and Onesimus?
- How is the providence of God implied in this experience?
- On what ground did Paul beg Philemon to receive Onesimus?
- In what way had Onesimus wronged Philemon?
- What does Paul propose to do about this wrong?
- How does Paul suggest payment of this debt to Philemon?
- What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?



### THIRD QUARTER

## SELECTIONS FROM THE POETICAL BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

AIM.—To examine specimens of lyric poetry from the Old Testament, to note its striking imagery, its lofty sentiments and its moral strictness, and to imbibe the pure religious spirit with which it is saturated.

### Lesson I—July 1, 1956

## A PSALM AT EVENING

### Lesson Text

1 Answer me when I call, O Psalm 4:1-8  
of my righteousness; Thou hast set mine bed, and be still. fSe'-lah  
me at large when I was in distress: 5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And put your trust in Je-ho'-vah.  
Have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.

2 O ye sons of men, how long shall my glory be turned into dishonor? How long will ye love vanity, and seek after falsehood? [Se'-lah  
6 Many there are that say, Who will show us any good? Je-ho'-vah, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.

3 But know that Je-ho'-vah hath set apart for himself him that is godly: Je-ho'-vah will hear when I call unto him.  
7 Thou hast put gladness in my heart, More than they have when their grain and their new wine are increased.

8 In peace will I both lay me down and sleep; For thou, Je-ho'-vah, alone makest me dwell in safety.

4 Stand in awe, and sin not: Commune with mine own heart;—"I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart; and my spirit maketh diligent search." (Psalm 77: 6.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 8: 1-8.

### Daily Bible Readings

June 25. M	Evening and Morning—First Day (Gen. 1: 1-5)
June 26. T	Evening of Life (Psalm 90: 1-7)
June 27. W	Harvest in Evening (Eccles. 11: 1-8)
June 28. T	Shadows of Evening (Jer. 6: 1-8)
June 29. F	Weather in the Evening (Matt. 16: 1-4)
June 30. S	Prayer as Evening Sacrifice (Psalm 141: 1-10)
July 1. S	Light in the Evening (Zech. 14: 1-8)

TIME.—1023 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSON.—David.

### Golden Text Explained

1. The setting of the text. This Psalm was not written by David, but by Asaph. This man was a musician, one of the leaders of David's singers. (1 Chron. 6: 39.) There were other men by this name, some of them living at a later date. Some of the Psalms attributed to Asaph (50, 73-83) are thought to have been written at a late date, during the captivity. Some think our text was written by one in distress on account of the captivity, but of that we cannot be sure. Of one thing we can be sure, however, that the writer of this text was in trouble and was trying in many ways to find relief from that sorrow and discomfort. He was so dejected and despondent that even when he remembered God he was

disquieted. It has been suggested that he thought only of the "justice, wrath, and dreadful majesty" of God, rather than of his goodness, love, and mercy.

2. Calling the past to remembrance. First, he said he "considered the days of old, the years of ancient times." This seems to be a reference to God's dealings with men of old. He tried to derive comfort from such considerations. But such considerations depend somewhat upon the mood as to whether they will bring comfort. If one thinks of God's dealings with the wicked or indifferent, he will not be encouraged. Next, he says he called to remembrance his song in the night. This may be thought of as songs which in the past had given him cheer, and may suggest our efforts to sustain ourselves in time of sorrow and trouble by leaning upon ourselves rather than going to Jehovah who is our high tower, our refuge and our rock. (Psalm 19: 14; 61: 3.) There was a time in the writer's life that his songs in the night brought him cheer, but from this present trouble they were no relief. So he had to look higher. And in the verses following our text we see him turning to God and finding that comfort which he could not find by looking into his past.

3. I will commune with mine own heart. This is another instance of turning to one's own resources. The fact he communes with his heart rather than with his passions, his ambitions, or his avarice and greed is encouraging. He will come nearer

doing the right thing if he communes with his heart. But since it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps (Jer. 10: 23), communion with his heart cannot be expected to give him sure guidance. If a man could rely upon his own heart to bring him cheer and comfort in all the trials of life, he would have no need for God. When the writer turned to the thought of the greatness of God and could say, "Thou art the God that doest wonders: thou hast made known thy strength among the peoples. Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people," it was then that he began to find comfort and relief from the troubles that oppressed him.

4. My spirit maketh diligent search. Some of the questions which he pondered during this search are recorded in the verses that follow. "Will the Lord cast off for ever? And will he be favorable no more? Is his lovingkindness clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" He could not bring himself to accuse God of having done these things, so he began to turn to thoughts of the goodness of God as well as his justice; of his power to do good as well as to punish and destroy; of his mercy and lovingkindness as well as his vengeance upon evil-doers. When he had thought of God in these ways, he could conclude with joy that "there is none like unto thee among the gods, O Lord." (Psalm 85: 8; 89: 6.)

## Introduction

Since we are to have eight lessons from the book of Psalms, it seems to devote these eight introductions to a brief study of the book, its authors, its doctrines, and its value to us in the hope that greater interest may be stimulated in exploring this great storehouse of spiritual treasures.

First, we are told that the Hebrew title for the book is "Book of Praises." More than twenty of the chapters have the praises of God as their keynote, chapters 111 to 113, 135, and 146 to 148 being good examples.

Next, it is in place to say that no one has ever doubted the right of this book to be accepted into the

canon of scripture. Both Jews and believers in Christ accept the book; and it has been said if the average believer were restricted to the use of only one book in the Bible, that book would be Psalms.

David is usually spoken of as the author of the book, but every thoughtful reader of the book knows that David did not write all of the Psalms, nor did he collect them all as we now have them. It is impossible to determine the writer of some of them, but David is given credit for seventy of them. Asaph is given credit for twelve; the sons of Korah, eleven; Solomon, two; Moses, one. Different versions credit others such as Jere-

miah, Zechariah, and Haggai with one or more.

Some have denied that music and poetry were so highly developed in the days of David. But to take this position we must deny the value and accuracy of the historical books, for they attribute a very high degree of poetic ability to David in the poems he composed and recited concerning the death of Saul and Jonathan. (2 Sam. 1: 19-27.) And if we deny the Davidic authorship of many of these Psalms, we must deny not only the inspiration of the New Testament, since there we are told that David wrote things contained in them, but we must deny that Jesus knew the author of Psalms, for he attributed some of them to David. It is known that Samuel organized schools of the prophets and that music was encouraged in their religious exercises.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. David Requests To Be Heard

(Psalm 4: 1)

*Answer me when I call.* As has been suggested, this Psalm was written when David was in sore trouble. Many think it was written while he was engaged in the task of putting down the rebellion of Absalom. David is pictured as coming into his tent in the evening after a day of anxiety and hard work, and while resting he engages in meditation and prayer. He pleads with Jehovah to answer him when he calls. He expects to be heard because God has promised to hear them that fear and trust him. Jehovah had said, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." (Psalm 50: 15.) Again, speaking of the man who trusts him, "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble: I will deliver him, and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation." (Psalm 91: 15, 16.)

O God of my righteousness. This address to Jehovah suggests two things. (1) David's innocence. David expects to be heard when he calls because he is a righteous man. "The eyes of Jehovah are toward the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry." (Psalm 34: 15.) Of course David does not claim perfection, but

It is also known that David was an experienced musician with ability to play soothing strains. (1 Sam. 16: 23.) He was an inventor of musical instruments. (Amos 6: 5.) David was a man of deep feelings and tumultuous emotions and a very energetic and enthusiastic worshiper of God. These qualities combined with the imagination which he is known to possess would make a poet if there were individual or national experiences of sufficient excitement and importance to stir to poetic expression. And we know that such experiences were not lacking in the day of David. His fight with the giant, his loss of Jonathan, the removal of the ark to Jerusalem, his sorrow and penitence with reference to his sin with Bathsheba, and many others afford sufficient excitement to stir the gift of poetry within him.

he does claim, by the mercy of God, to stand in such relationship to Jehovah that he may commune with him and be heard when he needs him. (2) That this righteousness is of God; Jehovah is its source. He called Jehovah the God of his righteousness. This gives Jehovah all the credit for his righteousness. And certainly none of us could be righteous before him were it not for the atonement of Jesus Christ and the mercy of God to forgive us of our sins.

*Thou hast set me at large when I was in distress.* To set at large, or in a large place, means to deliver. "He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me." (Psalm 18: 19; see also 118: 5.) David expects to be heard in his present distress because Jehovah has in the past brought him into a large place when in distress.

*Have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.* This may be regarded as another reason why David expected Jehovah to hear him during this distress. He is a God of mercy; David is in need of mercy as much as in the past when Jehovah had heard him. "Remember, O Jehovah, thy tender mercies and thy loving-kindnesses; for they have been ever of old." (Psalm 25: 6.)

## II. David Addresses His Enemies

(Psalm 4: 2-5)

*O ye sons of men.* His enemies are termed sons of men rather than sons of God. Their enmity for him and their sin against him make it impossible that he recognize them as sons of God.

*How long shall my glory be turned into dishonor?* He is King of a great nation, but he is hiding in the wilderness like a criminal. He has palaces in which to dwell, but they make him rest in a soldier's tent. As the king, he should be directing the affairs of the nation in its commerce with other nations of the world, but his enemies consume his time and attention in civil war. Not only is he embarrassed as to rank and station in life, but his talents are being used in such ways as to lower him in the estimation of the kings of the nations around him. Men of the world who have held him in honor will now dishonor him.

*How long will ye love vanity?* Absalom and his helpers were trying to overthrow the government. God had anointed David, had placed him on his throne. In order to accomplish their purposes, Absalom and his confederates would have to thwart the purposes of God. Had not God promised the throne to David as long as he lived and to his son after him? (2 Sam. 7.) From the point of view of a man of faith in the promises of God, it is a vain thing to expect to keep God from doing what he has promised to do. And one is simply seeking after falsehood, cherishing a vain empty hope, to think he can accomplish such a hope.

*Know that Jehovah hath set apart for himself.* In this verse David is represented as saying to his enemies (not to them personally, but in this evening meditation) that God has set apart the godly as his own property and that he will care for his own. The word godly means a pious, God-fearing man. We are told that Jehovah preserves them that love him. (Psalm 145: 20.) Again, "Jehovah preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth him that dwelleth proudly." (Psalm 31: 23.) The one whom Jehovah has set apart for himself can so live that God will cease to protect him (Ezek. 33: 12ff.) but if he remain faithful to God, all

hell with the help of all his enemies on earth cannot destroy him. (John 10: 27-29.) God has nowhere promised to guard and keep the unfaithful and disobedient, but he has promised to guard and keep those who love and serve him. (2 Thess. 3: 3; 1 Pet. 1: 3-5; Rev. 2: 10b; 3: 15, 16.)

*Stand in awe, and sin not.* The word awe means "profound and reverent dread inspired by deity." (Webster.) David admonishes his enemies to count the cost of a campaign against God's anointed who is faithful to God. If that anointed one should become unfaithful, God could be expected to use men to take him off the throne and put a better man in his place; but David has before declared his innocence of such sin as would force him to forfeit his throne. Hence, they are not opposing a mere man; they are opposing God's anointed. They should stand in awe, change their minds, and cease their sins. A proper regard for God and his ability to punish the disobedient should be a powerful force in our lives to keep us from sin. People cannot engage continually in such thoughts of God and continue to sin.

*Commune with your own heart upon your bed.* David suggests to his enemies that they take time to think of their opposition to God; sleep over the matter and arrive at more sensible views of things. He exhorts them to commune with their hearts, not their ambitions, their lusts for power and position. They should stand in awe of God and then follow their better judgment, and cease to be driven by greed and covetousness.

*Offer the sacrifices of righteousness.* David pleads with his enemies to offer righteous sacrifices. No one can offer such sacrifices while he is living contrary to God's will. So this is really an appeal for them to cease their opposition to God's anointed so they can offer sacrifices which will be acceptable. We can profit by this lesson by realizing that we cannot offer acceptable sacrifices of praise and service (Heb. 13: 15, 16) while our every-day life is not in harmony with the will of God. To lie and gossip, to cheat and steal, to curse and swear through the week and then try to worship and serve God on Sunday is an abominable

thing; with such sacrifices God is not well pleased.

*Put your trust in Jehovah.* He counsels them not to trust in men where there is no help (Psalm 146:3), but to put their trust in Jehovah. The man is a fool who puts his trust in himself. (Prov. 28:26.) Those who put their trust in horses and chariots to accomplish that which is contrary to the will of God will be disappointed. (Isa. 31:1.) Nations of the earth today should learn to put their trust in Jehovah rather than in superior planes, ships and bombs. God is spoken of as a rock, a tower, a place of refuge so that all may put their trust in him at all times. (Psalm 37:3-5; 62:6-8.)

### III. An Evening Prayer (Psalm 4:6-8)

*Who will show us any good?* We are told by Hebrew scholars that the word *any* has been added to the text, there is no Hebrew word for it. David says many people wish to know where to find good, the *summum bonum*. His enemies were seeking that which they thought was their good. But men can be mistaken about what is good for them. Absalom thought the highest good on earth for him was to be king of Israel, even if he had to kill his father to get what he desired. So there are selfish people in the world today who think they are entitled to have and enjoy what they want regardless of how others are made to suffer. Solomon, after a life of experimentation, concluded that man's greatest good is found in fearing God and keeping his commandments. (Eccles. 12:13.) And Peter agrees by saying man can get the greatest good from life by fearing God and working righteousness. (Acts 10:35.)

*Lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.* This is David's prayer as the evening shades are falling about him. This is his desire in contrast with the desire of his enemies. They seek worldly goods and gain; he seeks only the approbation and favor of Jehovah. The countenance reflects the attitude of one toward others. If the attitude is one of peace and joy, the countenance is bright and pleasant; if the attitude is one of enmity and hate, the countenance is somber, dark and gloomy.

So David prays for the light of God's countenance to be upon him. This is taken from the blessing which Aaron and his sons were to pronounce upon Israel. "Jehovah bless thee, and keep thee: Jehovah make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: Jehovah lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." (Num. 6:24-26.)

*Thou hast put gladness in my heart.* David's greatest desire had been fulfilled. He had longed for the approval and favor of Jehovah. Though he is fleeing before his enemies, his own son is trying to take the throne from him, he has inward peace and joy in the knowledge that God is with him and approving his conduct. Inward peace and joy are not determined by physical conditions and circumstances. The bedridden sufferer may have joy and peace in his heart, while the rich man faring sumptuously every day is a stranger to such feelings. Assurance of a proper relationship with God, a knowledge that we have done our duties to the best of our ability, and a fervent penitent prayer for forgiveness of our mistakes can be relied upon to bring more genuine peace and joy than all the wealth, power, and position which this world can bestow upon a man. And David suggests that the gladness he has as the result of God's favor is more than his enemies have when their grain and new wine, their material prosperity, have been increased. Yet all of us are liable to give more time and attention to increasing material wealth than we give to cultivating the favor of Jehovah.

*In peace will I both lay me down and sleep.* Since he is assured of the light of God's countenance upon him, he can both lie down in peace and sleep. It is a fine thing to be able to lie down in peace with all men. (Rom. 12:18.) Paul realized that such was not always possible, so he tells us to do so if possible. But it is a wonderful thing to be able to lie down every night in peace with God. This is always possible, thanks to that reconciliation with God which we enjoy in Christ. (2 Cor. 5:19; Col. 1:20-23.) The fact that David could lie down in peace and assurance of protection was an indication of his great trust in the Lord to care for him. The providential care of God

over those who put their trust in him is taught throughout the Bible, and the only reason one has any fears of something happening to him which is not for his good is his lack of trust in God to keep his promise. . (Prov. 16: 7; 1 Pet. 3: 13; Heb. 13: 6; Matt. 6: 25-34.)

For thou, *Jehovah*, alone makest me dwell in safety. David recognizes that only Jehovah can give him that greatest of all good in life. All men seek for happiness, for the greatest good in life, but so many of them do not look to God for it. To the man of the world such a course is foolish. He thinks peace and happiness are obtained only through his own exertions and those of his fel-

lows whose cooperation he can gain through his influence upon them. So he begins, not only by his own exertions, but to play politics with his fellows in order to secure their exertions in his behalf. So he becomes absorbed and entangled in the ways of human wisdom and ingenuity, working feverishly and frantically for that which David says only God can give. If a man will conform to the ways of Jehovah, even his enemies will be made to be at peace with him. So peace and security, joy and contentment, rest and safety are to be found in God. If we are right with God, we need not be concerned about the world and how it is going to treat us.

### Lessons to Learn

1. Prayer is in place at all times, but there are good reasons for prayer in the evening. (1) We have so many things for which to be thankful, so many blessings received during the day that we cannot count them; (2) the provident care of God about us, keeping us from dangers seen and unseen, places us under obligations to thank God; (3) we need to search and try our hearts to see if there is evil, if mistakes have been made, and ask God to forgive us; (4) we need to ask his blessing through the night that we may enjoy the rest and sleep of the righteous.

2. David sets us a good example of

warning the unrighteous (1) to stand in awe of God; (2) to cease committing sin; (3) to offer the sacrifices of righteousness; and (4) to put their trust in Jehovah.

3. The greatest good in life does not come from our wisdom in manipulating worldly forces in our behalf, but from Jehovah. The conditions are such that the poorest and most insignificant person on earth can have it as well as the rich and powerful. And one encouraging thing about it is that our Lord tells us that the poor are more likely to seek and obtain that *summum bonum* or chief good, than are the rich and mighty.

### Questions for the Class

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

#### Golden Text Explained

Who is the author of our text?  
What do you know of this man?  
What was the condition of the writer at the time of writing?  
How did the writer seek comfort from the past?  
What of his success?  
What is meant by communing with his heart?  
When did the writer begin to find the comfort he sought?  
What are some of the questions his spirit contemplated?

#### Introduction

What was the Hebrew title for the book we are studying?  
How is the book of Psalms regarded in comparison with other books of the Bible?  
How many Psalms did David write? and Moses? and Asaph?  
What evidence do we have in the histori-

cal books that David was a poet of ability?

What evidence do we have in history that he was a musician?

What experiences did he have that might excite him to use his gift of poetry?

#### David Requests To Be Heard

What trouble is thought to have caused David to write this Psalm?

On what grounds could David expect to be heard by the Lord?

What two things are suggested by the expression "God of my righteousness"?

What did David mean by saying he was set at large?

What does David say of the mercy of Jehovah?

#### David Addresses His Enemies

What term does David use in addressing his enemies?

How were his enemies turning his glory into dishonor?

What is meant by loving vanity?

Whom has Jehovah set apart for himself? Can one who has set apart for Jehovah ever fall?

What is meant by standing in awe of Jehovah?  
 What will continuous right thoughts of Jehovah do for one?  
 What is meant by communing with one's own heart?  
 What are the sacrifices of righteousness?  
 In what do many of the world put their trust?  
 What is said of them?

An Evening Prayer

What is the one thing for which all men seek?

What in David's estimation was the supreme good in life?  
 How did the high priest express this supreme good when he blessed the people?  
 How did Jehovah put gladness in the heart of David?  
 What does David say of the possibility of material wealth bringing happiness?  
 What was an indication of David's great trust in Jehovah?  
 How does the godly differ from the ungodly in seeking peace and safety?  
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

## Lesson II—July 8, 1956

### A PSALM OF TRUST IN GOD

#### Lesson Text

Psalm 27: 1-10

1 Je-ho'-vah is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? Je-ho'-vah is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?

2 When evil-doers came upon me to eat up my flesh, *Even* mine adversaries and my foes, they stumbled and fell.

3 Though a host should encamp against me, My heart shall not fear: Though war should rise against me, Even then will I be confident.

4 One thing have I asked of Je-ho'-vah, that will I seek after: That I may dwell in the house of Je-ho'-vah all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of Je-ho'-vah, And to inquire in his temple.

5 For in the day of trouble he will keep me secretly in his pavilion; In the covert of his tabernacle will he

hide me; He will lift me up upon a rock.

6 And now shall my head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me; And I will offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto Je-ho'-vah.

7 Hear, O Je-ho'-vah, when I cry with my voice: Have mercy also upon me, and answer me.

8 *When thou saidst*, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Je-ho'-vah, will I seek.

9 Hide not thy face from me; Put not thy servant away in anger: Thou hast been my help; Cast me not off, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

10 When my father and my mother forsake me, Then Je-ho'-vah will take me up.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*Jehovah is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*" (Psalm 27: 1b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 27: 11-14.

#### Daily Bible Readings

July 2.	M.	Jehovah Our Trust (Psalm 71: 1-5)
July 3.	T.	Trust in Christ (2 Cor. 3: 1-11)
July 4.	W.	Some Trust in Wealth (Psalm 49: 1-6)
July 5.	T.	Trust in Vanity and Lies (Isa. 59: 1-8)
July 6.	F.	Trust in Riches (Mark 10: 23-31)
July 7.	S.	Woe to Trust in Chariots (Isa. 31: 1-9)
July 8.	S.	Trust in Jehovah (Psalm 31: 1-14)

TIME.—Unknown.

PLACE.—Unknown.

PERSONS.—Unknown.

#### Golden Text Explained

1. Jehovah and man's life. (a) Jehovah is the giver of life. Writers of both Testaments recognize God as the source of life, both physical and spiritual. David said the fountain of life is with Jehovah. (Psalm 36: 9.)

Jeremiah said his people had forsaken Jehovah, "the fountain of living waters." (Jer. 2: 13; 17: 13.) And Job said God had granted him life. (Job 10: 12.) And Paul told the Athenian philosophers that the God unknown to them "giveth to all life, and breath, and all things . . . for in him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17: 25, 28.) Speaking of the deity of the Logos, the Word which became flesh to live among us, John said, "in him was life." (John 1: 4.) This simply says that he is the source of all life, (b) Jehovah is the preserver of life. Jehovah says the saints are preserved forever by Jeremiah. (Psalm 37:-28b.) And in the last few verses of that chapter he describes God's preservation of his people. And Jehovah will preserve the poor and keep him alive. (Psalm 41: 2.) (c) Jehovah is the judge of life. "For God is judge himself." (Psalm 50:-6b.) "But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and lifteth up another." (Psalm 75: 7.) And he is "judge of the earth." (Psalm 94: 2.)

2. Jehovah is our strength. The margin has the word stronghold. Man has not the strength to stand against Satan; he has no stronghold into which he can flee for refuge, except in Jehovah. David declares that "Jehovah is their strength, and he is a stronghold of salvation to his anointed." (Psalm 28: 8.) Psalm 46 is devoted to praising God for being our refuge and strength, a present help in time of trouble, (a) In our youth. God is a help to man in all stages of growth and development. David invited the children to listen while he taught them the fear of Jehovah, in which he assured them they would find life and good days. He would help them to keep their tongue from evil and their lips from speaking guile, and he would redeem them from all affliction if they would take refuge in him. (Psalm 34: 11ff.) "Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By

taking heed thereto according to thy word." (Psalm 119: 9.) (b) In the strength of manhood. Men in middle life are prone to rest in their own strength and feel that they do not need to depend upon Jehovah as a refuge from the perils and trials of life. But David was in his prime when he praised Jehovah for giving him strength to live right, and for being a stronghold into which he could retreat when in danger. (Psalm 18: 32.) He said a mighty man is not delivered by his own strength. (Psalm 33: 16.) And they go "from strength to strength" when they appear before God in Zion. (Psalm 84: 7.) (c) In old age. Jehovah does not forsake us in our declining years. The Psalmist represents the aged as praying, "Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth . . . Yea, even when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not, until I have declared thy strength unto the next generation." (Psalm 71: 9, 18.) And again we are assured that those who are planted in Jehovah's house "shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be full of sap and green." (Psalm 92: 14.)

3. The soul's response, (a) Courage. Our text implies that all who take Jehovah as their strength, or make him their stronghold, will be afraid of none. "Jehovah is on my side; I will not fear." (Psalm 118:-6.) "I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." (Psalm 23: 4b.) (b) Steadfastness. "Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." (Psalm 16: 8b.) "He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my high tower; I shall not be greatly moved." (Psalm 62: 2.) Our only hope of being steadfast amid the temptations, trials, and hardships of life is to make Jehovah our help. (c) Peace. "Jehovah will give strength unto his people; Jehovah will bless his people with peace." (Psalm 29: 11.)

### Introduction

Something as to the general character of the book of Psalms should be of interest to the student. First, all should know that the book is divided into five great divisions.

or books. Book I, Psalm 1 to 41; Book II, Psalm 42 to 72; Book III, Psalm 73 to 89; Book IV, Psalm 90 to 106; and Book V, Psalm 107 to 150.

The Psalms are spoken of as lyric

poetry. This is true primarily because they are songs "suited to be sung to the lyre," which is Webster's first definition for lyric. But lyric poetry has come to mean poems "expressive of the poet's feelings rather than of outward incident or events, and may take a special form, as ode, sonnet, hymn, roundel, or any of numerous verse schemes." (Webster.) And according to this definition we may still class the Psalms as lyric poetry, since they are the expression of the feelings of "trouble, anguish, fear, hope, joy, trust, thankfulness, devotion to God, penitence for sin, and the exultation of forgiveness,—*the heart moved*, and finding vent for its feelings in words adapted to the melody of the lyre, or the musical tones of the voice.

Albert Barnes classifies the one hundred fifty Psalms under the following heads: (1) Hymns of praise to God. a. Praising God as the God of nature and men, 8, 104, 145. b. Praising God as the God of nature and the Hebrew people, 19, 29, 33, 65, 93, etc. c. Praising God as the God of the Hebrews, 47, 66, 67, 75. d. Praising God as helper and deliverer

of his people 46, 48, 76, 138. (2) Psalms pertaining to the Hebrew nation, its history, help of God, and its relation to Jehovah, 78, 105, 106, 114, (3) Temple Psalms, or songs of Zion, 2, 15, 24, 87, 132. (4) Psalms in relation to trial, calamity, distress of individuals or the nation, 7, 22, 102, 109, and many others. (5) Religious and moral, 1, 23, 90, 119, 131, 133, and others.

The lyric poetry of the Jews differs from that of all other people in that all of it is deeply spiritual. None of the poetry in the Hebrew language "was designed and adapted to the dance, to festive amusements, to Bacchanalian orgies, to scenes of gaiety, frivolity, and vanity." All of Hebrew poetry is deeply religious. The only reasonable explanation any one has given for this is that the Hebrew poets "were *inspired* to prepare and transmit to future times that which, in all ages, would express the feelings of true devotion, and which might be permanently employed in the praises of God." Many of the prophets expressed themselves in poetry which compares favorably with the best of the Psalms.

## Exposition of the Text

### I. David Trusts God in Times of

#### Danger (Psalm 27: 1-3)

*Jehovah is my light and my salvation.* In darkness man is often at the mercy of his enemy, but in the light there is more security. David says that Jehovah is his light. In another place he says, "Jehovah my God will lighten my darkness." (Psalm 18: 28b.) In his description of glorified Zion, Isaiah said, "Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for Jehovah will be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." (Isa. 60: 20.) Light is associated with safety and gladness, but darkness with peril and mourning. And Jehovah was David's salvation. This simply means that David trusted Jehovah to save him. He had done so many times under similar circumstances, so why should David doubt him now. (Psalm 37: 25.)

*Of whom shall I be afraid?* When people realize that they belong to the Lord and are fully committed to him, and when they cease to value earthly

life above life with the Lord on the other side, they will cease to worry about the future and to be afraid of what may happen to them. Paul did not know what was going to happen to him, but he knew he was going to magnify the Lord whether he lived or died. (Phil. 1: 20.) He had unreservedly committed himself to the keeping of the Lord (2 Tim. 1: 12), so it mattered little what men might do to him so long as he was in the hands of the Lord.

*When evil-doers came upon me.* To what event in his life David refers here we have no way of knowing. It is possible that he has no particular event in mind, but that the language could be applied to several times in his life when he was in danger. He represents his foes as coming to eat his flesh. By this he means that they came like wild beasts: they had no regard for human life than ravenous beasts. They would destroy him and devour all he had with the same satisfaction that beasts get from eating his flesh. The tribe to which his enemies belonged are still abroad

in the land, so there is still a place in the life of the Christian for the same trust which David had in Jehovah.

*They stumbled and fell.* David's trust in Jehovah was justified. His enemies failed to accomplish their aims. David says his enemies "stumble and perish" at the presence of Jehovah, who rebuked the nations, destroyed the wicked, and blotted out their name for ever and ever. (Psalm 9: 3ff.)

*Though a host should encamp against me.* David is sure of two things. First, he is sure of the presence of God when he is in danger. Such has been his experience in the past, and such is his confidence in the promises of the Lord that he does not doubt in the least that God is with him all the time, much more when his enemies are gathering to do him harm. Second, David is sure of the ability of the Lord to take care of him regardless of the number and power of his enemies. This reminds us of the experience of Elisha and his servant. Elisha's enemies came to take him, and the servant was afraid when he saw their show of might. But Elisha assured the servant that "they that are with us are more than they that are with them," and then he prayed for the Lord to open the eyes of the servant that he might see that "the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." (2 Kings 6: 14ff.) "The angel of Jehovah encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." (Psalm 34: 7.)

*Though war should rise against me.* David could think of nothing which would involve him in greater danger and come nearer shaking his confidence in Jehovah than war. Yet in the face of such grave dangers as war would entail, and in spite of the worries and anxieties it would bring upon him, he was sure he would still be taken care of by the Lord.

## II. Davids Desire to Worship God.

(Psalm 27: 4-6)

*One thing have I asked of Jehovah.* Of all the things which he might desire. David could without hesitation point to the one thing that stood out above and beyond all others, to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life. He had already expressed confidently that

"goodness and lovingkindness shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of Jehovah for ever." (Psalm 23: 6b.) This one desire was above all others because he could say, "Jehovah, I love the habitation of thy house, and the place where thy glory dwelleth." (Psalm 26: 8.)

*That will I seek after.* He is not content with entertaining this desire, but he is determined to do all in his power to gratify that desire. Too many of us have desires to worship and serve the Lord, but such desires are not intense enough to motivate us; they do not drive us toward the satisfaction of those desires. Paul's one consuming desire, his passion in life, was to save the lost. He was willing to be anathema from Christ if that would bring about the salvation of his Jewish brethren. (Rom. 9: 1-4.) And this desire drove him from one place where the gospel had never before been preached to another where he could preach it for the first time. If our desire to worship God is as strong as it should be, we will not allow anything to stand in our way. Many of us allow bad weather, kinfolk, special programs of entertainment and many other forms of temporal and worldly matters to keep us from regular worship. This is simply because we do not have as strong desire as we should. When we can truthfully say with David that the desire to worship is the strongest desire we have, we will not allow things of a worldly nature keep us from it.

*To behold the beauty of Jehovah.* Of course, David does not mean to say that he could see Jehovah in the place of worship. But he does mean to say that the forms of worship were such as to manifest the glories of God. In the sacrifices he saw the justice and mercy of God—justice in that he demanded the sacrifice of a life on account of sin, and mercy in that he was willing to accept a substitute and forgive sin that the sinner might live. He saw the goodness and wisdom of God in that he had provided a way for sinful man to obtain forgiveness of sins and to cultivate a love for God which would lead man to become like God and so be fitted for communion with him in the next life. When David prayed, he saw the love of God that made it

possible for him to be a worshiper in the house of the Lord. If we will cultivate the ability to see and appreciate these and many other things which make up the "beauty of Jehovah," we will enjoy the periods of worship more than staying at home that we may enjoy the special television programs.

*And to inquire in his temple.* Though the word temple is used here, this is not proof that this Psalm was written after the time of Solomon. "The word here used would be applicable to either, considered as the palace or the residence of Jehovah." (Barnes.) David would go to the house of Jehovah to gain instruction. Jehovah had promised to commune with his servant Moses at a place over the mercy-seat concerning the commandments he gave Israel. (Ex. 25: 22.) And the law was to be read "before Jehovah thy God in the place which he shall choose" that they may learn to fear Jehovah. (Deut. 31: 10ff.) So the house of God was considered a place of instruction, and David's greatest desire was to go there to behold the beauty of God as manifested in the worship and to learn of God's ways.

*He will keep me secretly in his pavilion.* The word pavilion here is simply another word for the dwelling place of God. It means a tent or tabernacle. David says when he is in trouble the Lord will hide him, keep him secretly, in his dwelling place. This will not only secure his safety, but will give him added opportunities to behold the beauty of Jehovah and gain the instruction for which he seeks. The next two lines repeat the same sentiment with slightly different figures. To be in the covert of his tabernacle means to be in the inner secret places, which enlarges on the idea of safety and intimacy he enjoys in the house of God. And to be lifted upon a rock means to be placed on secure footing out of reach, in some inaccessible place, where his enemies cannot reach him.

*Now shall my head be lifted up.* This is the language of exaltation and victory over his enemies. Bowing the head is indicative of sorrow and defeat; lifting up the head is a sign of happiness and victory. David does not expect to lift up his own head; he does not attribute victory to him-

self. It is Jehovah who shall lift up his head above his enemies round about him.

*I will offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy.* In gratitude for the blessings he enjoys he will offer up joyous sacrifices; he will engage in his worship in joyfulness. David's worship was not so much form and ceremony which had to be performed to keep out of hell. He did not look upon it as much demanded by the Lord, and that by doing it he would obtain certain blessings in exchange for his service. Worship in the tabernacle of Jehovah was to him a thing of joy, an experience rich with spiritual fellowship and communion with Jehovah. If we could feel that way about the periods of worship twice on Sunday and on Wednesday night, our church buildings would not hold the crowds that would gather. And there would be a great change in the lives of the people, a change for good; and there would be a great increase in the influence of the church on the world.

*I will sing praises unto Jehovah.* This is the response of David's heart to all that Jehovah has done for him. He will sing praises; he will praise God for his goodness, and loving-kindness endureth for ever and ever. (Psalm 136.)

### III. David's Prayer for Mercy (Psalm 27: 7-10)

*Hear, O Jehovah, when I cry.* The fact that David prayed fervently when in danger is no proof that he did not trust God to keep him securely in the covert of his tabernacle. Rather his prayer is proof of his trust in God. We are to trust God for daily bread, but still he teaches us to pray for it. (Matt. 6: 11.) Prayer is one of the conditions on which we are promised the help of God, and it is proof of our trust in him to bless us.

*Have mercy also upon me.* David's prayer is for mercy. Surely that should be the prayer of every one of us. If the Lord were to deal with us according to the demands of strict justice, not one of us could be saved; our only hope is that his justice will be seasoned richly with mercy. We should never cease to be thankful that "he hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us after our iniquities. For as the heavens are

high above the earth, so great is his lovingkindness toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." (Psalm 103: 10-12.)

*Thy face, Jehovah, will I seek.* David says this statement is the response of his heart to the request of Jehovah. The Lord asked to seek the face of Jehovah, and immediately his heart responded in these words. "The heart asked no excuse; pleaded for no delay; desired no reason for not complying with the command, but at once assented to the propriety of the law, and resolved to obey." This is the response of all who have made complete surrender to the will of the Lord. Too many of us have surrendered with reservations; perhaps it is better to say some of us have made a truce, an armistice, with the Lord. We are no longer in open hostility, but we have not made an unconditional and complete surrender to do his will.

*Hide not thy face from me.* For Jehovah to lift up his face, or to make his face shine upon us, means to experience his favor and blessing; to hide his face from us is to deny us his favor and blessing. Realizing that his ordinary mistakes and sins are enough to justify God's turning his face from him, David prays for him to be merciful and hide not his face from him when he prays. If there were no other blessing to be gained from reading the Psalms, they would be eminently worth while as examples of beautiful language to use when praying to Jehovah. If our people were better acquainted with the Psalms, the tone and equality of our public prayers would be improved noticeably.

*Put not thy servant away in anger.* David does not argue that he is worthy of being in the presence of Jehovah, of dwelling in the house of Jehovah to behold his beauty; he simply pleads for mercy to be allowed to be there. The Lord would have a right to put him away in anger, but he pleads for the Lord to show his mercy rather than his anger. The same thought is continued in the next line when he says, "Cast me not off, neither forsake me."

*Thou hast been my help.* The fact that Jehovah had been his help in the past is used as a reason for his boldness in asking that such help be continued. Surely all of us can testify to the fact that God has been our helper in years past. And since he is the same yesterday, today, and forever, we should be encouraged to trust him to continue to help us in times of trial and hardship. Theoretically we believe he will help us in time of danger and suffering, but we do not take advantage of his help in a practical way by going to him in prayer regularly. Families need his help, but there are very few families that pray together regularly.

*When my father and my mother forsake me.* This is David's way of saying that Jehovah is more faithful to help us in times of need than are our fathers and mothers. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, these may forget, yet will not I forget thee." (Isa. 49: 15.) As the child trusts its parents to care for it when in need, so David teaches us we can depend on God to take care of his children. And as God is more faithful and dependable than parents, we can be assured that he will care for us even when the best of parents forsake us.

### Lessons to Learn

1. Trust is defined as "assured reliance on another's integrity, veracity, justice, etc." (Webster.) Perfect trust is absolute and unlimited reliance and resting on another. We cannot conceive of a man trusting his physician, but refusing to take his medicine; or of trusting the surgeon, but being afraid of his knife. The person who trusts God lives as God directs; those who fail so to live advertise their lack of trust.

2. Genuine enjoyment of the fel-

lowship of the saints and the communion of God will bring one often to the place of worship. It is true that one can worship at home while the saints are gathered at the place of worship, but if that one is at home because he is too lazy or indifferent to go to the place of worship, he will not and cannot worship God acceptably by himself.

3. Since our sins justly condemn us, we are wholly dependent upon the mercy of God for salvation. But

this does not mean that salvation is unconditional, or that we can ignore such conditions of salvation as do not appeal to us as being reasonable.

In his mercy God has granted salvation to us on the condition that we obey him. To refuse to meet these conditions is to spurn his offer.

### Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

What of the time, place, and persons of this lesson?

#### Golden Text Explained

What can you say of Jehovah as the giver of life?

What is said about Jehovah preserving life?

What do you know of God as the judge?

What is meant by Jehovah being our strength?

Discuss Jehovah as our strength in youth, in middle age, and in old age.

How does the soul respond to the thought of Jehovah as our strength?

#### Introduction

What do you know of the general division of the book of Psalms?

Why are the Psalms classed as lyric poetry?

Discuss the five classifications of the 150 Psalms.

What is peculiar about Hebrew lyric poetry?

#### David Trusts God in Times of Danger

What lesson is suggested by Jehovah being our light?

How can we be free from all fear?

How did David describe the manner of the attack of his enemies?

To what extent was David's trust in Jehovah justified?

Of what two things was David sure which made him unafraid of a host?

Can you relate the experience of Elisha suggested by this trust?

#### David's Desire to Worship God

What was the one thing David desired most?

How did Paul's one consuming desire motivate him?

What is meant by beholding the beauty of Jehovah?

Where did David expect to see it?

What other blessings did David expect to receive in the temple?

What is meant by pavilion?

What did David expect to receive there?

What is meant by the covert of God's tabernacle?

The lifting up of the head means what?

What did a period of public worship mean to David and to you?

#### David's Prayer for Mercy

What is the relation of prayer to trust?

Why must God deal with us in mercy rather than in justice?

What is meant by seeking the face of Jehovah?

What does the hiding of God's face indicate?

How would acquaintance with the Psalms help us in our public and private prayers?

What statement suggests that David realized he was not worthy to be in Jehovah's presence?

What statement suggests that David was accustomed to receive help from God?

What human relationship does David use to illustrate the faithfulness of God to help us?

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

## Lesson III—July 15, 1956

### GOD OUR REFUGE

#### Lesson Text

Psalm 46: 1-11

1 God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.

2 Therefore will we not fear, though the earth do change, And though the mountains be shaken into the heart of the seas;

3 Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, Though the mountains tremble with the swelling thereof. [Se'-lah

4 There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God, The holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.

5 God is in the midst of her; she

shall not be moved: God will help her, and that right early.

6 The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved: He uttered his voice, the earth melted.

7 Je-ho'-vah of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge.

8 Come, behold the works of Je-ho'-vah, What desolations he hath made in the earth.

9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; He burneth the chariots in the fire.

10 Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.

11 Je-ho'-vah of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge. [Se'-lah

GOLDEN TEXT.—"For thou hast been a refuge for me, a strong tower from the enemy." (Psalm 61: 3.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 54: 1-7.

**Daily Bible Readings**

July 9.	M.	Cities of Refuge (Num. 14: 1-7)
July 10.	T.	God Refuge of the Poor (Psalm 14: 1-7)
July 11.	W.	Refuge Under His Wings (Psalm 57: 1-5)
July 12.	T.	Jehovah a Strong Refuge (Psalm 71: 1-7)
July 13.	F.	God the Rock of Refuge (Psalm 94: 12-23)
July 14.	S.	A Place of Refuge (Isa. 4: 1-6)
July 15.	S.	Flee for Refuge (Heb. 6: 13-20)

TIME.—Unknown, but thought to be about 519 B.C.

PLACE.—Unknown.

PERSONS.—Attributed to sons of Korah.

**Golden Text Explained**

1. Appreciation for past blessings. The writer of our text speaks of past blessings in such way as to indicate an appreciation for what God had done for him in the past. Lack of gratitude is a great sin, and much of its magnitude lies in the fact that it is so unnecessary. Gratitude does not cost one dollar and takes but very little time and effort, yet it speaks volumes concerning the person in whose heart it is found. And ingratitude is just as quick to express itself and as loud in making itself known. One who is not grateful for favors from God or man advertises himself as being wholly unworthy of whatever favors he has been shown, regardless of how small they were. And one who never shows gratitude for favors shown will soon become known as an ingrate unworthy of favors and will cease to be shown favors. "Give, and it shall be given unto you" is a rule which may be applied in many different fields of activity. Show favors, and favors shall be shown unto you; be an ingrate and nobody will show you favors.

2. Faith in future blessings. Our text indicates that the writer had faith in blessings in the future. People who have no expectations of future good, who look to the future with gloom and foreboding, are usually lacking in appreciation. The two, faith in the future and gratitude for past favors, usually keep company: where one is found you usually

find the other. But this writer continues in his song, saying that God would allow him to dwell in his tabernacle forever, to take refuge in the covert of his wings, and while he did so he would sing praise to God forever. So with gratitude in his heart for past blessings and faith in his heart for blessings to fill every future need, our writer is a good example for all of us today.

3. Need for a place of refuge. Our text sounds a familiar note, the author strikes a universal chord. All men realize the need of a refuge from their enemies, (a) Nearly all of us at one time or another need refuge from worry. The aged are especially in need of this blessing. Youth is inclined to be hopeful when there is no basis for hope; but aged people are prone to worry when there is no basis for anxiety. The Lord has told us to cast our cares upon him because he cares for his own. We are to be anxious in nothing—don't worry about anything; but let your requests be known to God, and you will have peace that passeth understanding. (Phil. 4: 6, 7.) (b) All of us need a refuge from justice. Strict justice, a stranger to mercy, would condemn all of us, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. But we can find a merciful refuge in God, who gave his only Son to die for us that we might not have to suffer the penalty for our sins. Jesus suffered in our place: he is the refuge our heavenly Father has pro-

vided for us into which we can run and be safe, (c) All of us need a refuge from death. Paul classes death as an enemy. (1 Cor. 15: 26, 54.) And he gives thanks to God for the victory which we gain in Christ Jesus our Lord. If it were not for the refuge which the Lord provides from this enemy, every one of us would be eternally destroyed. None of us has the ability to hold out against death. None of us has the ability to go into the grave, grapple

with death, and come back in triumph as Jesus did. But thanks be to God. we can share in his victory over death, if we turn to God for refuge, (d) All who live godly lives will need refuge from persecution. Paul says the godly will be persecuted. (2 Tim. 3: 12.) In God as our refuge we will find grace to bear trials (2 Cor. 12: 9), courage to meet new hardships, and wisdom to live as we should while under these trials.

### Introduction

It has been said that we might take as a motto for the whole of the book of Psalms this statement: "I will cry unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and he will give ear unto me." (Psalm 77: 1) "For, whether immersed in the depths, or whether blessed with greatness and comfort on every side, it is to God that the psalmist's voice seems ever to soar spontaneously aloft. Alike in the welcome of present deliverance or in the contemplation of past mercies, he addresses himself straight to God as the object of his praise. Alike in the persecutions of his enemies and the desertions of his friends, in wretchedness of body, and in the agonies of inward repentance, in the hour of impending danger and in the hour of apparent despair, it is direct to God that he utters forth his supplications. . . . But meanwhile he is praying; the apparent impossibility of deliverance cannot restrain his God-ward voice; and so the very force of communion with God carries him, almost unawares to himself, through the trial." (Smith's Bible Dictionary.)

The perfections of God are mentioned in such way as to indicate that the writers had views of Jehovah which were not common to other writers of their time. God is light. (27: 1.) God is unsearchable. (145: 3.) God is eternal. (90: 2.)

God is omnipotent. (104: 2.) He is omniscient. (139: 1-6.) God is omnipresent. (139: 7.) God is immutable, or unchangeable. (102: 26, 27.) God is good. (119: 68.) God is righteous. (145: 17.) God is holy. (99: 9.) God is glorious. (145: 5.) God is gracious and merciful. (116: -5.) His lovingkindness endures forever. (136.) He is just in his judgments. (9: 8.) His works are glorious. (19: 1-6.) There are others which the student will locate by reading with the view to locating such things. And the student will be repaid richly for his efforts if he will read the book with this purpose in mind, underlining the verses in which such characteristics of God are mentioned.

It is worth while to notice the attitude of the writers of the Psalms toward the law of the Lord. It is perfect. (19: 7:.) It helps to overcome sin. (119: 11.) It gives understanding. (119: 104.) It is a lamp to guide us. (119: 105.) It is right concerning all things. (119: 128.) Obedience to the law brings peace. (119: 165.) Every verse in this longest chapter (119) mentions the word of God. Again the student will be repaid for making a list of the things which are said about the law and noticing the reverence the writers had for it.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. God a Present Help in Trouble

(Psalm 46: 1-3)

*God is our refuge and strength.* This is a favorite expression with the Psalmist in his effort to describe God as affording a place of safety for his people in time of trouble. (Psalm 14: 6: 62: 7, 8.) We are told

that the word refuge is from a verb which means *to flee*, and then comes to mean a place to which people flee in times of danger. So God is to us in times of spiritual danger what the walls of a fortress would mean to a soldier in time of attack; what a bomb-shelter would mean to

people when a city is being bombed by the enemy. To say that Jehovah is our strength is simply to say that he is the source of strength in time of temptation, or when we are unable by our own wisdom and strength to do his will.

*A very present help in trouble.*

(a) We have the affirmation that God is a help in trouble. All men have their troubles at one time or another during life, so all men need God. This suggests something of the power of God; he is able to help all people at the same time. His resources are not to be exhausted by the multitude of requirements of the people who call upon him. There is no limitation to the kind of trouble; he is able to help in any and all kinds of trouble known to mankind.

(b) God is a *present* help. This means that he is near, he can help you at the time you need help. A physician may be able to help the sick, but he is limited by time and distance. He can help only a limited number of people. He can help only those who are within a reasonable distance. But God is not limited in these ways. This is proof of the omnipresence of God. He is here with us, but he is just as near to the man in China, Africa, and India as he is near to us. This Psalm was not written for Americans alone, so God is as much a *present* help to the people of one nation as he is to the other. (Psalm 145: 18.) God is a *very present* help. This word is used to qualify and intensify the idea of God being a present, accessible, help. The use of this word encourages us to call on him for help. The fortress would do the soldier no good if it is not accessible; the bomb-shelter is of no benefit if it is inaccessible. God is not only accessible, but he is very accessible: not to a part of humanity, but to all mankind.

*Though the earth do change.* This Psalm was written when some national danger was imminent. Many think it was written when Sennacherib "the Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold" and threatened to destroy Jerusalem. (2 Kings 19 and 20.) The following lines describe in poetic language cataclysmic disturbances, and this may be viewed as a general statement of which the following lines give the particulars. Though the face of the whole earth

be changed in one violent disturbance, the Psalmist says he will not be afraid as long as he has God for his refuge and source of strength. The Assyrian army was the greatest destructive force in that day, but even that great machine of destruction could not change the whole earth. If God could afford such refuge as to protect him from a force which could change the whole earth so that he would have no fear, why should he fear in the face of the Assyrian army or any other lesser force?

*Though the mountains be shaken.* Hills and mountains are symbols of strength and of refuge. As the high mountains afford refuge for the wild goat, and the rocks in those hills afford hiding places for the conies, so Jehovah is a place of refuge for man. (Psalm 104: 18.) And as a man may lift his eyes to the mountains for refuge, so the Psalmist says his help comes from Jehovah. (Psalm 121: 1.) But if such sturdy symbols of strength and safety be shaken, the Psalmist says he will still trust in Jehovah.

*Though the waters thereof roar.* He will not fear the waters of the seas in spite of their turbulence and threatenings, if only he can find refuge in Jehovah. "Remember how, not only in Scripture but in all poetry, the sea has been the emblem of endless unrest. Its waters, those barren, wandering fields of foam, going moaning round the world with unprofitable labor, how they have been the emblem of unbridled power, of tumult and strife, and anarchy and rebellion!" (Maclaren.) This likely refers to some international disturbance such as that of the threatened Assyrian invasion. It is said that Martin Luther often sang this Psalm to calm his fears amidst the turmoil and strife incident to his efforts at reformation.

*Though the mountains tremble.* This statement pictures the sea hurling its waters at the base of a mountain rising from the shore, hurling its weight with such fury that the mountain trembles. The thought is that though there be such social and political convulsions about me as are calculated to cause the strongest to tremble, I will not be afraid as long as I can take refuge in Jehovah. These are wonderful statements of

trusts, and we will do well to hide them in our hearts and make them a part of our philosophy.

## II. God Is in the Midst of His People.

(Psalm 46: 4-7)

*There is a river.* Here is a contrast to the picture presented above. The surging of the sea, the roar of its billows, the pounding of its waves against the shore, its fields of foam indicative of wasted energy—all these things give us the picture of conditions among the enemies who have not Jehovah for their refuge. But the gentle, quiet flow of the river as it goes along carrying its life-preserving power to man and beast and herb gives us the picture of Jerusalem because she has Jehovah for a place of safety.

*The streams whereof make glad the city of God.* This river is said to have streams. This suggests outlets or canals through which the water of the river reaches the places where it is needed. "So here, the flowing river of divine mercy and goodness is conveyed, as in smaller canals or streams, to each home and heart, producing peace, calmness, joy—while the world around is full of commotion and trouble." (Barnes.) The city of God is said in this verse to be "the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High." This undoubtedly refers to Jerusalem. So we have a picture of Jerusalem dwelling in peace and security so long as that city takes refuge in Jehovah. It was only when through their sins God was no longer able to dwell there that the peace of Jerusalem was turned into fear and her security into danger.

*God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved.* God is the refuge of his people. And he is accessible to all of them because he dwells in the midst of them. As God was viewed as dwelling in the midst of Jerusalem, securing the peace and safety of that city, so he is said to dwell among his people today and gives them a peace that passeth understanding. As long as God dwelt in Jerusalem, no enemy was strong enough to conquer that city. But when God departed, the enemy came in. This is true with reference to both individuals and congregations today. We have a picture of the Lord standing outside the church at La-

odicea knocking to be readmitted. He had once dwelt within, but their sins made that no longer possible. (2 Cor. 13: 5.) Repentance and reformation would make it possible for him to come back in.

*God will help her, and that right early.* Some try to make a connection between this and the destruction of the army of Sennacherib in the early morning. But it seems best to give it no such forced and strained meaning. God has been pictured as a *present* help, as one which is accessible to all. Now the Psalmist goes a step further to say that God will give help immediately. As soon as the need arises, the help is offered. Our God does not procrastinate. Help "too little and too late" is a bad policy in any situation. Jehovah our refuge gives all the help we need as soon as the need arises, and for that reason his people need never be moved. But the fact that God offers help when needed does not guarantee that one who needs help will use it. God provides a way of escape from all temptations (1 Cor. 10: 13), but that does not guarantee that all his people use that way of escape every time they are tempted.

*The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved.* This is another way of picturing the national disorders of the time. In the midst of all these disturbances Jehovah "uttered his voice," he spoke a word, and all was still. The English poet, Byron, put it well in his poem on "The Destruction of Sennacherib," which event may have been the occasion of this Psalm.

"For the Angel of death spread his wings on the blast,  
And breathed in the face of the foe  
as the foe he pass'd;  
And the eyes of the sleepers wax'd  
deadly and chill,  
And their hearts but once heaved,  
and for ever grew still!

"And the might of the Gentile,  
unsmote by the sword,  
Hath melted like snow in the  
glance of the Lord!"

*Jehovah of hosts is with us.* Whether the word *hosts*, armies (Adam Clarke), refers to the host of heavenly bodies (Maclaren is difficult to determine. But certainly the sun, moon, and stars are referred to as the host of heaven. (Gen. 2: 1;

Deut. 4: 19; 17: 3.) And it truly makes good sense here to say that the God who made and controls all the heavenly bodies is not so big and busy but that he can be the God of Jacob, a lonely wanderer, and with us when we are in trouble. The God that controls the host of heaven can control the forces of evil which gather against us, and we can feel secure when we take refuge in him.

### III. Demonstrations of God's Power

(Psalm 46: 8-11)

*Come, behold the works of Jehovah.* The Psalmist invites the reader to consider the works of Jehovah which demonstrate his power over the forces of nature and the armies of men. We are invited to take knowledge of the desolations he has wrought in the earth. Earthquakes and floods, famines and pestilences have been used of Jehovah to punish the wicked and, at times, to keep the wicked from destroying the people of God. And these desolations have been wrought among God's people when they were disobedient. But regardless of where they have been wrought, they are manifestations of his power. And this power can be used to protect the righteous. For this reason all may rejoice who have Jehovah as their refuge.

*He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth.* If this was written on the occasion of the destruction of the army of Sennacherib, this language would be appropriate. One hundred eighty-five thousand men lay dead after the angel of Jehovah had done his work, and Sennacherib went back home unable to carry out his intended conquest of India and Egypt. (Barnes.) However Adam Clarke thinks the Psalm was written during the captivity and refers to the accession of Darius to the throne of Persia and the period of peace ushered in at that time. But it is not necessary that we know just what event was the occasion of the writing of the Psalm in order to get the lesson intended. God has the power to make wars cease all over the earth. If he has the power to bring peace to all the earth, certainly he has power to give peace to any individual who will take refuge in him.

*He breaketh the bow.* This is a further demonstration of his power

to care for all who make him their refuge. These are the instruments of war and destruction. He can break the bow, cut the spear, and make useless any weapon of war. Though Israel's foes far outnumbered them and had much superior weapons, they could never prevail against God's people as long as God was with them. Numbers and armament mean nothing to him who can slay hundreds of thousands by speaking a word. He could burn their chariots with fire, or he could take off the chariot wheels so that the enemy could not make progress. (Ex. 14: 25.) His power is infinite, his resources unlimited, his loyalty to his people unbounded, and his promised word is unbreakable.

*Be still, and know that I am God.* We would say, Relax, and give consideration to these facts so that you may realize what these things mean. Hurry, worry, and fear often keep company; quiet, calm thoughtfulness, faith, and courage often keep company.

*I will be exalted among the nations.* The rulers of the earth may forget God for a time; they may boast of what they have done with their armies; and they may boast of far greater things in the future, but it is still a fact that God raises up rulers, and he puts them down. (Dan. 4: 25.) Sometimes God is exalted by the overthrow of a nation, while in another instance he is exalted by the setting up of a nation. There is no power but that of God (Rom. 13: 1), and the rulers of this earth are but the ministers of God for punishment of evildoers and the protection of the law-abiding citizen. God is exalted as much in the punishment of the one as he is in the protection of the other. If we make Jehovah our refuge, we need have no fear of the powers.

*Jehovah of hosts is with us.* Jehovah who controls the hosts is on our side and is willing to use all his resources essential to our protection. Only a lack of faith in God can cause one to entertain any fears for his safety when he has this God for his refuge. The practical issue of this lesson is that we be sure we have made him our refuge. The fact that there are so many denominational groups thinking they are in his keeping when their conflicting

doctrines and practices prove that not all of them can possibly be right should make us all use extreme care in studying the Bible to be sure that we have done just what the Lord teaches one to do to be saved. There are no physical and tangible evidences of our acceptance with him; we walk by faith, the faith which

comes by hearing the word of God. Hence, the only way we can know that we have God for our refuge is to study his word and know that we have obeyed the gospel. When we have done this, we have his un-failing promise that he will be our Father and we his children.

### Lessons to Learn

1. The prophets of Baal called long and loud, but their god did not hear. Elijah told them their god must have gone on a journey, or was hunting. But Elijah's God was a present help; he answered the first time Elijah called. We should be glad that we have Elijah's God, the very present help, as our refuge in time of trouble.

2. This period of American history will likely be regarded as the time of greatest unrest, of strife and turmoil in our relations with the nations of the world. We live in constant

threat of war so that it is difficult for young men to make definite plans for living a normal life. This emphasizes the need of making God our refuge so that we may be calm regardless of how the seas of trouble roar or the mountains tremble.

3. God's demonstrations of power in days past are recorded to give us faith to make him our refuge. If those who saw his power were moved to trust him, we should follow in their footsteps to make Jehovah the place of safe retreat from the storms of life.

### Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?  
Repeat the golden text.  
What do you know of the time, place, and persons?

#### Golden Text Explained

Discuss appreciation versus ingratitude for past favors.

What is the connection between gratitude and future blessings?

Name and discuss several enemies from which all of us need refuge.

#### Introduction

What statement may serve as a motto for the book of Psalms?

Name and discuss as time permits the perfections of God mentioned in Psalms.

What was the attitude of the writers of Psalms toward the law of Jehovah?

#### God a Present Help in Trouble

What is the meaning of refuge and of strength in our text?

State and discuss three reasons why God is a very present help in trouble.

Amid what kind of world-shaking disturbances did the Psalmist say he could trust God?

What is pictured by the shaking of mountains and the roar of the seas?

#### God Is in the Midst of His People

By what figure of speech does the writer picture God as related to Jerusalem?

Distinguish between the river and the streams thereof.

According to the Psalmist, who shall not be moved?

What statement suggests immediate help from God?

How does God still the raging of the nations?

What is meant by Jehovah of hosts?

#### Demonstrations of God's Power

What does the Psalmist invite his readers to behold?

Tit is meant by making wars to cease? Can you give an example?

What is God said to do to make wars cease?

What does the Psalmist ask us to do to know about God?

How may we know that God is with us?

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

Lesson IV—July 22, 1956

SONGS OF THE WANDERER

Lesson Text

2 Mine enemies would swallow me up all the day long; For they are many that fight proudly against me.

3 What time I am afraid, I will put my trust in thee.

4 In God (I will praise his word), In God have I put my trust, I will not be afraid; What can flesh do unto me?

5 All the day long they wrest my words: All their thoughts are against me for evil.

6 They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, They mark my steps, Even as they have waited for my soul.

7 Shall they escape by iniquity? In anger cast down the peoples, O God.

8 Thou numberest my wanderings: Put thou my tears into thy bottle; Are they not in thy book?

9 Then shall mine enemies turn back in the day that I call: This I know, that God is for me.

10 In God (I will praise his word), In Je-ho'-vah (I will praise his word),

11 In God have I put my trust, I will not be afraid; What can man do unto me?

12 Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render thank-offerings unto thee.

13 For thou hast delivered my soul from death: Hast thou not delivered my feet from falling, That I may walk before God In the light of the living?

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I take refuge, until these calamities be overpast." (Psalm 57: 1b.)  
 DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 57: 1-11.

Daily Bible Readings

- July 16. M. . . . . Wanderers Among the Nations (Hos. 9: 10-17)
- July 17. T. . . . . Wanderers of Israel (Num. 14: 25-35)
- July 18. W. . . . . Wander Not from Commandments (Psalm 119: 10-16)
- July 19. T. . . . . Wicked Love to Wander (Jer. 14: 10-18)
- July 20. F. . . . . Wander from Sea to Sea (Amos 8: 11-14)
- July 21. S. . . . . Faithful Wander (Heb. 11: 32-40)
- July 22. S. . . . . God Numbers Our Wanderings (Psalm 56: 1-9)

TIME.—About 1060 B.C.  
 PLACE.—Perhaps in Gath of the Philistines.  
 PERSONS.—David and the Philistines.

Golden Text Explained

1. Protection. This is a favorite theme with Old Testament writers and is not at all uncommon in the New Testament. However, Old Testament writers emphasize protection of life amid natural calamities, while New Testament writers put the emphasis on the spiritual. According to Old Testament writers, God's protection is (1) indispensable (Psalm 127: 1); (2) immediate (Psalm 46: 1); (3) unflinching (Deut. 31: 6; Josh. 1: 5); (4) uninterrupted (Psalm 121: 3); (5) perpetual (Psalm 121: 8); (6) encouraging (Isa. 41: 10; 50: 7). And God's protection (1) preserves the saints (Psalm 145: 20); (2) upholds his people (Psalm 37: 17, 24; 63: 8); (3) keeps them during calamities (Psalm 59: 16; 91: 3-7); (4) keeps them during sleep (Psalm 3: 5; 4: 8); (5) keeps them in the face of death (Psalm 23: 4). And God's protection is promised to (1) them that fear Jehovah (Psalm 25: 12, 13); (2) to the contrite in heart (Psalm 34: 18); (3) to the poor (Psalm 14: 6; 72: 12-14); (4) to the oppressed (Psalm 9: 9); and (5) to them that pray for help (Psalm 91: 15). If the student will take time to read, he will be rewarded with more information on the subject.

2. Chosen protection. Though there are certain natural blessings that come to all, such as sunshine and rain, life and good health, God does not force his providence upon any; if we enjoy the protection of God, we must seek it. In our text, David says he seeks the protection of Jehovah. God is willing to protect all, but he does not force it upon any. Jesus taught this lesson in a beautiful figure of speech as he was leaving Jerusalem after his last day's work. He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathered her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." (Matt. 23: 37.) It is a known fact that a hen will cover with her wings all the chicks that will come under them and protect them from the rain. But she will allow a chick to drown within reach before she will take hold with her bill and pull that chick under her wing. So God will protect in the shadow of his wings all who will come under his protection; but he will allow to perish all who refuse to place themselves under his protection. Jesus said, "Come unto me . . ."; "the Spirit and the bride say, Come"; the Father says, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come." (Isa. 55: 1.) All heaven invites and the church echoes the invitation to come to the Lord for protection from sin and its destructive consequences, but no power in heaven or on the earth

will force one to receive the protection so graciously and freely promised.

3. Protection without discrimination. No one class of people have priority or special rights to the protection of God. Perhaps more is said about God's protection of the poor, weak, and oppressed than any other class of people, yet God will not protect a man simply because he is poor, nor will he refuse to protect one simply because he is rich. While it is true that God protects the righteous and god-fearing and refuses to protect the ungodly, there is still no discrimination except that which man brings upon himself. The godly man enjoys the protection on condition of his godliness, and the ungodly man is denied the protection because of his ungodliness. If the ungodly will turn from his ungodliness and do that which is right, he will receive the protection. (Ezek. 33: 14, 15.) Neither is there any national or racial discrimination with God when he gives protection to his people. There was a time when the Jews received certain protection and preservation which was not given to other nations, but their special work is over and so is the special protection which they received to enable them to accomplish the work God had for them to do. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free; all are one man in Christ. (Gal 3: 28.)

### Introduction

The writers of Psalms had a very reverent attitude toward Jehovah and ascribed praise to him for his many perfections. It would be impossible to gather them all in this short space, but one section is especially fruitful in this respect. (95 to 100.) (1) Jehovah is a great God, and a King above all gods. (95: 3.) And then he proceeds to give some reasons why he thinks Jehovah is a great God. (2) Jehovah is to be feared above all gods, for they are only idols, but Jehovah made the heavens. (96: 4, 5.) Honor and majesty are before him and strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. Then follows an exhortation to ascribe glory, honor, and strength to his holy name. (3) Jehovah reigneth; righteousness and justice are the foundations of his throne. (97: 1, 2.)

All nature co-operates to give him the honor which is due him. The heavens declare his righteousness; all peoples have seen his glory, so be glad in him, ye righteous, and give thanks to his holy memorial name. (4) He had done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have wrought salvation. (98: 1.) The writer then calls on all creation to combine in one great paean of praise. (5) Jehovah is holy. (99: 3, 5, 9.) And his holiness is made a ground for praise and thanksgiving which continue into the next Psalm. This section ends with the faithfulness of God to all generations and his kindness being praised by the Psalmist. The writers of the Psalms had an intense longing for fellowship and communion with God. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so

panteth my soul after thee, O God." (Psalm 42: 1.) He continues by saying his soul thirsts for God whose lovingkindness will keep him in the daytime, and in the night his song will put him to sleep in peace. Again, his soul thirsts and his flesh longs for Jehovah like the traveler in a dry and weary land thirsts for water and seeks for rest. (Psalm 63: 1.) He will lift up his hands to Jehovah's holy name; his soul shall be satisfied with marrow and fatness; his mouth shall praise with joyful lips; and he will remember Jehovah on his bed

during all the watches of the night. His longing for communion with Jehovah leads him to say he appreciates the courts of the house of Jehovah. (Psalm 84: 1ff.) The sparrow finds her a house and the swallow has a nest, so he delights in the courts of Jehovah with his altars for worship; and blessed is the man in whose heart are the highways to Zion, for, though he passes through the valley of (Baca) weeping, it shall become a place of springs, and the early rains shall cover it with blessings.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Fears and Faith of David (Psalm 56: 2-4)

*Mine enemies would swallow me up.* It is not possible to determine what event in the life of David was the occasion of writing these Psalms. Scholars differ widely on just about all of them, so we are not paying much attention to such matters. But it is in place to say that several scholars think this one was written with reference to his experiences with the Philistines in Gath. (1 Sam: 21: 10-15.) This is suggested also in the title in our Bible, the value of which is not very much, since they are the ideas of men and not given by inspiration. Adam Clarke says all the titles put together "are not worth one hour's labor." However, since they are about the oldest comments we have on these matters, they are worth consideration. In this Psalm David is conscious of his enemies and of their intentions to destroy him. He is fleeing from Saul; it is no longer safe to stay in his native land. He has just obtained the sword of Goliath from Ahimelech, and Doeg, the Edomite and servant of Saul, saw him take it. (1 Sam. 21: 7ff.) From there he went to be the guest of Achish, king of Gath, but his servants did not trust David, and soon he had to leave that place of refuge. We find him next at the cave of Adullam. (1 Sam. 22: 1.)

*There are many that fight proudly against me.* David realized that so far as human strength is concerned he was hopelessly outnumbered. He had a few chosen men whom he could trust and a mixed following composed of those in distress, in debt,

who were discontented and willing to follow him for the joy of plunder and the excitement of a fight. (1 Sam. 22: 2.) At the time he was in Gath, his force numbered about four hundred men; but at most he had around six hundred. (1 Sam. 23: 13.) This was but a handful compared to the army which Saul had under his command, or the armies of the Philistines whom David had to count among his enemies. So they could easily swallow him up. His safety lay in the providence of God, of which he was always conscious and for which he was ever most grateful.

*What time I am afraid, I will put my trust in thee.* Fear and faith are not incompatible; they can both dwell in the same heart at the same time. David was not ashamed to admit that he was afraid; nor was he hesitant to say that he trusted in a power that exceeded his own. Furthermore, it was in times when he was afraid that he most needed some one greater than man in whom he could trust. Fear is a part of the equipment which God has given the natural man, first for man's self-preservation, and next, to encourage man to depend upon God. The man who has absolutely no sense of fear of any kind will have difficulty realizing the need of God. David does not mean to say that he will not trust Jehovah in times when there is no danger; he will trust God all the time. But it is especially in times of danger that he most needs some one in whom to trust. If he can put his trust in Jehovah in times of danger, he will have no difficulty trusting him in times of peace and safety.

(*I will praise his word.*) This statement is in a parenthesis. The King James Version has no parenthesis, which makes the verse difficult to understand. He starts to say that he puts his trust in God, and then it occurs to him to give praise to God for his promise of protection; this promise of protection is the word of God for which David gives praise. For his promise of protection see the first division of the treatment of the golden text for today.

*In God have I put my trust.* Man is not delivered by his own strength. (Psalm 33: 16.) He is not saved by princes. (Psalm 145: 3.) Neither is he saved by great hosts of men. (Psalm 33: 16.) Nor will his riches save him in the day of trouble. (Prov. 11: 4.) Since God is the maker and preserver of man and is finally to make eternal disposition of him, it follows that the only wise thing to do is to put our trust in him.

*What can flesh do unto me?* What is the power of flesh as compared to that of God? Jesus tells us that we are not to fear man who can do nothing more than kill the body. We are to fear God who, after the body is dead, has power to cast both body and soul into hell. (Matt. 10: 28; Luke 12: 4, 5.) Since all things work together for good to them that love the Lord (Rom. 8: 28), we can put our trust in God and feel sure that if death of the body comes it will be his will and for our good. So why fear what man can do? Since the death of the body is the greatest injury man can do, and since Jesus tells us not to fear that, it follows that there is neither reason nor time for fearing what man can do.

## II. His Enemies and their Destruction (Psalm 56: 5-7)

*All the day long they wrest my words.* David says his enemies wrested perverted, his words; they put meanings to his words which he did not intend for them to carry. This is a favorite sport with people who intend to hurt others and still keep the respect of as many people as possible. Most commentators think this refers to accusations brought against David by the servants of Achish of Gath. (1 Sam. 21: 11, 12.)

*All their thoughts are against me*

*for evil.* The wresting of his words was a product of their thinking; this was one way they expressed their thoughts which were for evil. This suggests concerted movements on the part of his enemies, and deep seated intentions of destroying him. It was not a battle of one man against another, but a battle of one man against many co-operating together for his downfall.

*They gather themselves together.* The co-operation suggested above is brought to the light here. In another place he said that his enemies lay in wait, and the mighty ones gathered themselves together against him for no fault of his own. (Psalm 59: 3, 4.)

*They mark my steps.* This suggests that his enemies resort to spying on him so that he is never free to go and come as a free man. They not only watch him, but they note what he says and does. In this way they are able to wrest his words to make them mean something he did not intend to say.

*Even as they have waited for my soul.* The word soul here is used in the sense of life. They lie in wait to take his life. Saul was on the prowl for his life. There were enemies in Gath who would have been glad to take his life. Doeg, the servant of Saul, who would have been happy to slay him like he slew the priests for giving the sword of Goliath to David. The only reason some of these did not take David's life is the fact that God, in whom David put his trust, shielded him from danger both seen and unseen.

*Shall they escape by iniquity?* Do they think to escape the consequences of their sins in the multitude of their wicked acts? Will the number of men engaged in the pursuit of David to take his life make their cause look respectable? Can they wrest his words so that all men will lose faith in David and there will be no one to bring them to justice?

*In anger cast down the peoples, O God.* Despairing help from his fellow man, he turns to God. His enemies so outnumber him and they have so many big men and prominent names on their side that he entertains no hope of getting help or justice from man. This is one of those times for the man who trusts God to be afraid. He is not to be afraid God will fail him, but in his fear of the

wicked machinations of his enemies he may lose his life unless he places himself in the care and keeping of God, who is the refuge of all who put their trust in him in times of danger. Admitting his helplessness and trusting his welfare in the hands of Jehovah, David prays for his enemies to be cast down, their plans to be brought to failure. He prays for God to show his anger at such wicked machinations against a man who has done nothing to deserve such treatment.

### III. Expressions of Thanks and Trust

(Psalm 56: 8-13)

*Thou numberest my wanderings.*

David expresses confidence that God knows how he has been made to wander from one cave to another, from one town to another, and even to leave his native land to find refuge among ancient enemies, the Philistines. He is also confident that God will not forget these wanderings and the fear, unrest, and unremitting toils incident to these wanderings in the chill of winter and the scorching summer's sun.

*Put thou my tears into thy bottle.*

David had shed many tears over the loss of friends, the misunderstanding caused by the wresting of his words, the sufferings of those who died because of their service to him, as when Doeg slew the priests, and the forced separation from loved ones. He wished these tears to be remembered, so he prays for God to put them in his bottle lest they be lost and forgotten. This refers to an old custom, best known among the Greeks and Romans, but undoubtedly familiar to the Psalmist, of catching tears shed during the period of mourning for a loved one and preserving them in a bottle. This served to keep that one in remembrance much like keeping the shoes of a baby or a lock of hair in loving remembrance. We are told that such bottles are common in old tombs: they are called lachrymatories.

*Arc they not in thy book?* This is another figure. Instead of being kept in a bottle, David now speaks of them being remembered because they are recorded in God's book. It has been suggested that all tears are recorded, or remembered. If they are shed in righteous suffering and sorrow, they will be remembered to our credit:

if they are shed in suffering the due reward of our evil deeds, or in murmuring and complaining at our lot in the providence of God, they will be remembered against us.

*Then shall mine enemies turn back.*

David has confidence that his enemies will be defeated in the day he calls, or prays, to Jehovah. The word day must not be taken too literally here, for he had been praying many days, and his enemies had not been overthrown completely. They had been prevented from destroying David, and they would be completely destroyed in God's own good time. They had been turned back to the extent that David was safe in the keeping of Jehovah.

*This I know, that God is for me.*

The King James says, "This I know; for God is for me." According to this David is saying he knows his enemies will be turned back, for God is with him. The margin of our later version gives it the same way. This seems to be the best reading so far as the smooth flow of the meaning is concerned. But either reading bears the interpretation that David is confident of victory in the end since God is with him. Paul raises the question, "If God is for us, who is against us?" (Rom. 8: 31b.) No man or set of men, not even the devil and his angels, can do us any abiding harm if God is on our side. And another Psalmist said, "Jehovah is on my side, I will not fear: what can man do unto me?" (Psalm 118: 6.)

*I will not be afraid.* His determination to entertain no fear is the result of putting his trust in Jehovah. Notice the repetition and yet a variation of names in the tenth verse, "In God . . . in Jehovah . . . in God have I put my trust." He uses the common term as well as that sacred term which the Jews refrained from using (in the place of which they used LORD) lest they profane it. In this high and holy Being I have put my trust; if ho is for me, it is useless for any man or set of men to be against me. So there is no reason to be afraid of what men can do unto me. Such is the confidence of David in God to take care of him in times of trouble.

*Thy vows are upon me, O God.*

A vow is a voluntary obligation which one takes upon himself. To do something in response to a command-

merit is to render obedience to God; but to do something voluntarily beyond the line of duty is to make a vow and keep it. David had made some vow which he is here renewing. It was common in times of danger to make vows to God provided God would bring one safely through that period of danger. Jephthah made a rash vow to offer whatever met him upon returning in peace from the battle. Paul made a vow, the ceremonies of which he was completing when he was arrested in the temple. (Acts 21: 26ff.) There is no harm in making vows today. But to make one and then treat it lightly and live as if it had not been made will involve one in a false promise to God. The Jews were strictly charged to keep their vows. (Deut. 23: 21, 23.)

*Thou hast delivered my soul from death.* David gave God credit for preserving his life. This obligated him to do two things. First, he felt an obligation to keep his vow, to do whatever he had vowed to do, for were it not for the goodness of God in protecting him he would not even

be alive. Next, he felt obligated to continue to praise God for his goodness and to put his trust in him. Since he had preserved his life from his enemies, God richly deserved his continued confidence and thanksgiving.

*That I may walk before God in the light of the living.* To walk before God is to live under his inspection. If we are before him, he is in position to inspect our every deed. And when we realize that we are constantly under the inspection of an all-seeing eye, we will be more careful to walk circumspectly. To walk in the light of the living is to enjoy a normal life among other living creatures. David had not lived such a life while his enemies were hunting him like they would a wild beast. He had been hiding in the darkness of caves, in the shadows of the forest. He wished to cease to live as an animal in the darkness; he wished by the help of God to come out in the light of the living and enjoy a normal life.

### Lessons to Learn

1. "It is when we are afraid that we trust in God; not in easy time, when things are going smoothly with us. Not when the sun shines, but when the tempest blows and the wind howls about his ears, a man gathers his cloak round him, and cleaves fast to his supporter."

2. One of the most effective ways of destroying an enemy is to wrest his words from their true meaning and give them a meaning which will cause his destruction. This tends to

leave the impression that the man is responsible for his own destruction, and that the one who does the dirty work is as pure and white as a lily.

3. God remembers our sorrows and sufferings as if our tears were preserved in a bottle or recorded in his book of remembrance. Those who sorrow in the night may not have the sympathy of men, but they can rest assured that God sees in the night as well as in the day.

### Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

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

#### Golden Text Explained

Discuss as time will allow the teaching of the Old Testament on the protection of God.

How does Jesus teach the necessity of our seeking God's protection?

Discuss God's protection of his people without discrimination.

#### Introduction

State and discuss as time permits the Psalmist's reasons for his reverent attitude toward God.

How does the Psalmist describe his thirst for God?

How does he describe his delight in courts of Jehovah with its altars?

#### Fears and Faith of David

In reference to what occasion is this Psalm thought to have been composed?

How did David and his men compare in number with his enemies?

What do you know of his enemies and their positions politically?

Can you harmonize the presence of fear and faith in the heart at the same time?

What word does David praise and why?

Over what objects of usual trust did David pass to put his trust in God?

What does Jesus teach us with reference to fear?

#### His Enemies and Their Destruction

What is the first mentioned method of destruction used by David's enemies?

What is said about the thoughts of his enemies?

What is said of their co-operation?

What is meant by marking his steps and waiting for his soul?  
 What is meant by his enemies escaping by their iniquity?  
 For what did David pray God to do in his anger?

Expressions of Thanks and Trust

What is meant numbering his wanderings?  
 What is meant asking God to put David's tears in his bottle and writing them in a book?  
 When are his enemies expected to turn back?

What does Paul say about God being on our side?  
 What two names does David use to address deity in this text?  
 What is taught about vows and the keeping of vows?  
 What is suggested by our walking before God?  
 What influence will this inspection have upon our lives?  
 What is meant by walking in the light of the living?  
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson V—July 29, 1956

A PSALM OF MOSES

Lesson Text

1. Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Psalm 90: 1, 2, 4-6, 9, 10, 14-17

2 Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.

10 The days of our years are threescore years and ten, Or even by reason of strength fourscore years; Yet is their pride but labor and sorrow; For it is soon gone, and we fly away.

4 For a thousand years in thy sight Are but as yesterday when it is past, And as a watch in the night.

14 Oh satisfy us in the morning with thy lovingkindness, That we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

5 Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: In the morning they are like grass which groweth up.

15 Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, And the years wherein we have seen evil.

6 In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; In the evening it is cut down, and withereth.

16 Let thy work appear unto thy servants, And thy glory upon their children.

9 For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: We bring our years to an end as a sigh.

17 And let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us; And establish thou the work of our hands upon us; Yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"So teach us to number our days, that we may get us a heart of wisdom."* (Psalm 90: 12.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 93: 1-5.

Daily Bible Readings

- July 23. M. . . . . God a Sanctuary (Ezek. 11: 14-21)
- July 24. T. . . . . God's Throne from Old (Psalm 93: 1-5)
- July 25. W. . . . . The Lord Regards Not Time (2 Pet. 3: 1-8)
- July 26. T. . . . . Life as Grass Which Soon Dies (Isa. 40: 3-8)
- July 27. F. . . . . Our Life a Vapor (James 4: 13-17)
- July 28. S. . . . . Should Be Wise (Deut. 32: 28-36)
- July 29. S. . . . . Moses Blesses Israel (Deut. 33: 1-29)

TIME.—About 1475 B.C.

PLACE.—Unknown, but somewhere in the wilderness between Egypt and Canaan.

PERSONS.—Moses praying to Jehovah.

### Golden Text Explained

1. Estimate the swiftness of time. The word *number*, when used as a verb, means "to count, or enumerate . . . to fix the number or duration of." These are the only two definitions which could apply to the use of the word in our text. Since it is impossible for us to "fix the number or duration of" our days on this earth, we fall back on the first one of these definitions. But since we cannot look into the future, we must take this in the sense of estimating our days, or taking into account the number we may spend on earth and the swiftness with which they are passing by. Job said, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle . . . My days are swifter than a post." (Job 7: 6; 9: 25.) And James says it is like a vapor that appears for a little time and vanishes away. (James 4: 14.) One's life is like a breath (Job 7: 7); his days are like handbreadths (Psalm 39: 5); and his days consume away like smoke (Psalm 102: 3). These statements should impress us with the swiftness of our days on this earth when compared to eternity, though we may live by reason of strength and God's favor the allotted fourscore years.

2. Estimate the value of time. In estimating our days which we may spend on this earth, we should not forget to consider their value. And if we just look at the whole of life, we may never discover the value of one day. The child may think nothing of losing one day out of school because he has several years in which to get an education. Though a parent may reprimand the child for being so careless with such a valuable thing as time, that parent may be throwing away precious days and years which he should use making preparation for eternity. Time is given us here to develop a character which will be at home in heavenly environment. We have much to do to get ready for that new environment. Unholy desires and passions are to be eradicated, love of worldly pleasures is to be rooted out, and ugly tempers are

to be overcome. In the place of these things are to be planted those virtues which Jesus manifested in his exemplary life. Such work cannot be done in a month or a year, much less on one's deathbed. When there is so much to be done and so little time at best to complete the job, we should realize the value of one day and be determined to use each one to the greatest possible advantage. Let no day go by without saying and doing something which will better prepare us to meet God in the judgment and render us better prepared to enjoy and contribute something to the environment of heaven.

3. Purpose of numbering our days. Moses says that we are to number our days that we may get us a heart of wisdom, a wise heart. "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." (Prov. 9: 10.) Wisdom gained by numbering our days will cause us (1) to use each day well, as suggested above. (2) It will teach us to refuse to become entangled so much with the world that we cannot use our days for the Lord. Wisdom will not allow us to love the world to the extent that we will set our hopes on riches, honor, position, and power which the world has to offer. (3) Numbering our days will make us wise in preparing for the end. Moses sorrowed that his people would go into sin and wished that they could know "their latter end." (Deut. 32: 29.) If they had known the terrible suffering which would come upon their nation as a consequence of their sins, perhaps they would have been restrained from much of their evil. The wise heart will take these examples into consideration and realize that such suffering will result from our sins, and that eternal suffering will be the result of continued sin on our part. If we can get people to meditate upon such things, they will lose the joy and satisfaction they derive from engaging in sinful living.

### Introduction

The writers of the Psalms had a special delight in God's house. David said he was glad when they said unto him, "Let us go unto the

house of Jehovah." (Psalm 122: 1.) This should serve to help us cultivate a feeling of joy and satisfaction in taking part in the things which hap-

pen in the assemblies of the saints. Too many people look upon attendance at church as a duty, a burden, something we have to do to get to heaven, but which we would not do if we could get there without it. Many prefer to go to places of amusement; others prefer to enjoy an evening before the television set which brings the world's programs of entertainment right into our homes. They change from thoughts of the world to thoughts of God and heaven about like we used to shift gears on a car. Maybe it can be done, but it is too mechanical to allow of much of the spirit of delight which David expressed at being allowed to go to the house of Jehovah.

The writers of the Psalms had great love and for the word of God. "Oh how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day." (Psalm 119: 97.) "I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold." (Psalm 119: 127.) "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver." (Psalm 119: 72; see 19: 10, 11.) Since the law was a means of converting the soul, or of restoring it to the love and favor of God, and since the soul is worth more than all the world (Matt. 16: 25, 26), it follows that the word of

God is worth more to one than all the world would be if one could actually possess it in its entirety. One who actually realizes what this means and actually believes this statement of inspiration will love the word of God enough to study it, store it up in his heart to use in time of temptation, feast upon it as the food for his soul, and walk in its direction as the light of his life. He will rejoice at understanding the word, for it is 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 downhearted; 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 lesson we learn from it. To obey it is to build on the eternal Rock, to disobey it is to build on the shifting sands, and to neglect or refuse to learn it is to stand self-condemned.

### Exposition of the Text

I. The Eternal God Is Man's Dwelling-Place (Psalm 90: 1, 2)

*Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place.* The common word for Lord as a ruler or governor is used here, but it is no indication of age or period in which the Psalm was written, for the term Jehovah is older than Moses. (Gen. 15: 2.) It seems, however, that the full significance of that name was not known in earlier periods. (Ex. 6: 2, 3.) To call Jehovah a dwelling-place is to recognize him (1) as a refuge in time of trouble. Man likes to have a place where he can get from trouble and enjoy the fellowship of family and friends. Such a place is his home, his dwelling-place. Such is our relationship to God that he affords us this refuge. (2) God is a source of peace and comfort. When a man has battled the business world all day, he likes to come back home to enjoy peace, quiet, and comfort. In this sense God is our spiritual dwelling-place. (3) God is a source of love and con-

fidence. Man may be misunderstood and hated by the people of the community, but he expects to find love, understanding and confidence in his home. From this point of view God is the dwelling-place of all his children. (4) A place of intimate fellowship and communion. Man is made so that he craves companionship. It was not good for man to be alone, so God made woman to be his companion. Man finds the intimate satisfying companionship only in the home. In God man finds spiritual fellowship and communion, so Moses could say that God is our dwelling-place.

*In all generations.* From one generation to another without interruption. God is unchanging and unchangeable. Succeeding generations find him to be what preceding generations said he was to them. This is one of the values of the Old Testament, for therein is revealed much about the character of God and his dealings with humanity, and since

there can be no essential changes in him we may be sure of similar treatment of us.

*Before the mountains were brought forth.* This verse tells us in poetic style the eternity of God. One of Job's friends, in an effort to establish the youth and inexperience of Job, asked him if he was older than the hills. (Job 15: 7.) And Jehovah, in his reproof of Job, asked him where he was when the foundations of the earth were laid. (Job 38:4.) Wisdom establishes its age by saying it existed before the mountains were settled or the hills were brought forth. (Prov. 8: 25.)

*From everlasting to everlasting.* This simply means from the eternity past to the eternity in the future. This is an overwhelming thought. We can, in some measure, comprehend how a being once in existence can continue to exist without end. But to understand how a being can have no beginning, how he can be eternally self-existent, is beyond our ability to comprehend. We can believe it, but we cannot fully comprehend it. The unbelieving scientist say this is blind faith, credulity. But he is in worse position than this, for he must either believe that matter has always existed and has produced all we see about us, which is worse than credulity, or he must believe there was a time when absolutely nothing existed; that nothing got busy and became something all by itself and then produced life and all we see about us, which is even worse than the other alternative. We believe that Mind, in the person of God, has always existed and has produced all that now exists. We think it is more reasonable to believe that Mind has always existed than it is to believe that matter has always existed, or that matter automatically came into existence and then produced through evolutionary processes all that is about us.

*Thou art God.* Moses says that the one he addresses is God from eternity to eternity. This deals a death blow to the Mormon idea of divine progression. According to their view, God used to be a man on some earth, but has progressed until now he is God over this earth. We can become what God is now, but because of eternal progression, he will continue to make progress, so we

can never overtake him. But Moses says that the God he worshipped is God from everlasting to everlasting, from eternity to eternity; he is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

II. The Brevity and Frailty of Human Life (Psalm 90: 4-6, 9, 10)

*For a thousand years in thy sight.* Since God is eternal, time does not tell upon him as it does on us. The oldest man who ever lived was a little less than one thousand years of age when he died, but when he looked back upon that span, it did not appear to be so long as when one looks at it in prospect. If the past of our life does not seem to be long, certainly a thousand years with God does not seem more than yesterday.

*And as a watch in the night.* With the Jews a watch was a third part of the night, since they divided their nights into three watches. However, the Romans divided their night into four parts. But the idea is that a long period of time, a thousand years, is not as long to God as a watch in the night is to us. This is Moses' way of impressing us with the eternity of God and the brevity of human life. Like the morning mist, it appears for a little time and then vanishes away.

*Thou carriest them away as with a flood.* This denotes the suddenness of our departure from this world. People lie down in peace at night and before morning they have been swept away by a flood. Furthermore, floods are impartial and indiscriminating in their deadly work; they have no respect for the aged or the righteous, the sick or the lame; neither does death respect the person of any of us.

*They are as a sleep.* When we wake from sleep, we have no consciousness of time having lapsed. There have been dreams, some good and some bad. So at the end of life we look back over what seems but a short period filled with good and bad.

*In the morning they are like grass.* This is another figure of speech to emphasize the frailty of man as well as the brevity of his life. "As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more." (Psalm 103:-

15, 16.) Very few people accomplish enough to perpetuate their memory more than a generation, and even they are remembered because of indestructible records and monuments left behind. If life and all things temporal are so easily destroyed and so soon forgotten, why should we be so interested in accumulating so much and in trying to build a name and fame for this world?

*In the evening it is cut down.* Moses says we flourish in the morning and then in the evening we are cut down. The rich fool boasted of enough provisions to last him a long time and promised himself a life of ease and plenty. But that night his soul was required of him. (Luke 12:-20ff.) Moses' eye was not dimmed nor his natural forces abated one morning, but that evening the Lord with angels for pallbearers laid his body to rest in a lonely grave in the land of Moab. (Deut. 34: 6.) The grass is green and beautiful in the morning, but we can hardly give it the praise it rightly deserves for thinking of the ugly brown to which it will turn in the evening. So man and all that his own wisdom dictates is worthy of no lasting praise for so soon he falters, falls, and is gone and soon forgotten. Only that he does for God remains and is worthy of lasting praise.

*All our days are passed away in thy wrath.* Death is looked upon as an expression of the wrath of God against sin. By one man sin entered into the world, and death came through sin; so death passed unto all men. (Rom. 5: 12.) *An* men are condemned to death because of Adam's sin. As soon as man is born he is appointed to die. (Heb. 9: 27.) Since we are appointed to death on account of sin, we may be said to spend all our days in his wrath. Or it may simply mean that God soon turns our days away from us in his wrath, denies us any more days, as an indication of his wrath against sin. And as a sigh is a momentary thing, so comes our end.

*The days of our years are threescore and ten.* Adam Clarke thinks he has positive proof in this verse that Moses did not write this Psalm, for the length of the average life, he thinks, was more than seventy years in the time of Moses. Moses died at one hundred twenty, Aaron

a little older, and perhaps Miriam a little older than either of her brothers. But if this is proof that Moses did not write the Psalm, by the same method we could prove that the Psalm could not have been written until after Clarke's time, for he tells on the same page of two women of his acquaintance who lived to be more than one hundred years old.

*Or even by reason of strength fourscore years.* It is not too uncommon in our day to read of some one living to be one hundred years old. But that is not the average. In fact the average is below seventy in our part of the world. But we must take into consideration the fact that the Bible was written for all the world and for people over a long period of time. What the average span of life is over all the world from the time of Moses to the end of the world would be impossible for us to determine, hence it would be impossible for any man to prove that Moses did not tell the truth.

*Yet is their pride but labor and sorrow.* The thought is that extreme old age is the pride of those who attain it, but when they reach it that is all they have for which to be proud. Their strength is gone and they are incapable of enjoying life. Usually their minds are inactive, and they are not capable of teaching or counseling others. Their companions and friends of other days are gone, and the young generation has neither time nor place for them in their busy activities in business and pleasure. The thing of which they are proud, their extreme age, turns out to be nothing more than labor and sorrow, or an increase of these things. A few of these "last leaves" in a community should teach us who are able to read as we run that this world is not our eternal home and that there is a place for which we ought to make greater preparations than we make for our last days here.

### III. Prayer for Continued Favor

(Psalm 90: 14-17)

*Satisfy us in the morning with thy lovingkindness.* This part of the Psalm seems to refer to some time of visitation of the wrath of God, which period of time he represents as night. Then he prays that they may have a satisfying portion of his lovingkindness as soon as the night

is passed and the morning breaks upon them. As we are satisfied and refreshed with breakfast and the invigorating fresh air of the morning, so he wishes to be satisfied, filled completely, with the lovingkindness of Jehovah.

*That we may rejoice and be glad all our days.* As we go through the day on the strength of a good breakfast, so he says he can rejoice through all his days if he be filled with the lovingkindness of God.

*Make as glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us.* In keeping with the length of the period of suffering through which they had passed, the Psalmist prays that the days of satisfaction gained through a filling of the lovingkindness of God be prolonged. If the majority of our days be filled with sorrow and suffering, or if all our days be filled with gladness and prosperity, there is not that proper balance which makes for a well-rounded character. We need hardships to teach us dependence on God and sympathy for our fellow man; we need prosperity and happiness to encourage us and to enable us to help others. Moses prays for a balance of these things during his life so he may develop into the best and most serviceable character possible.

*Let thy work appear unto thy servants.* The emphasis seems to be on the word *appear*. Let this work of filling us with lovingkindness be manifest to us; let us see the work of thy deliverance that we may be encouraged and assured. And not

only does Moses pray that he may see the work of God in his deliverance from the night of suffering, but he prays that he may see in this work the glory of God. His character of goodness, mercy, wisdom, etc., will be manifested in his works, and this will cause men to love and appreciate him all the more.

*Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us.* By manifesting his works of deliverance and making known his character through those works, the people would experience and come to appreciate the favor of God. Man has never been able to get along without the grace of God, and yet that grace has always been bestowed on conditions which man has been required to meet. Meeting the conditions has never repaid God for manifesting his favor, but this has always been a condition on which God has been pleased to show his favor. So Moses immediately mentions things which they have done, not to merit the favor of God, but as a condition upon which they may expect the promised favor.

*Establish thou the work of our hands.* This refers to no particular work, but we may be sure it was something which it was the will of God for them to do. He simply prays for the success of their endeavors, that the work they are trying to do for the Lord may be completed, their plans may be realized, their efforts crowned with success. This well suggests that unless the Lord build a house they labor in vain who build it. (Psalm 127: 1.)

### Lessons to Learn

1. If the thought of God were not too big for us, he would not be God to us. He is unique, the only one in the universe. We have nothing with which to compare him; we must accept him by faith, and yet the evidences of his being and work in the universe are so overwhelming that only the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.

2. The brevity of our stay here on earth and the frailty of our constitution as compared to things heavenly should teach us to place more dependence upon those eternal unseen things which cannot be

shaken. Then when the world is on fire, the elements melting with fervent heat and the heavens are passing away with great noise, we will not be moved or made afraid.

3. Following the night of sorrow and suffering we may expect to be filled with the lovingkindness of God. The former is calculated to teach us dependence upon God and not to become too greatly attached to this world; the latter is to teach us the goodness of God and cultivate a desire in us to be with him in heaven forever.

### Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?  
 Repeat the golden text.  
 Give the time, place, and persons of this lesson.  
**Golden Text Explained**  
 What is meant by the word number in our text?  
 How does God teach us the fleetness of time?  
 How does our lesson teach us the value of one day?  
 Discuss some things to be done to get ready for heavenly environment.  
 What is the beginning of wisdom?  
 What will the wisdom gained through numbering our days teach us?

**Introduction**  
 What does our lesson teach about delight in the house of worship?  
 How did the Psalmist show his love for the word of God?  
 How did he value the word as compared to some earthly values?  
 Discuss some reasons why we should rejoice at understanding the word of God.  
**The Eternal God Is Man's Dwelling Place**  
 State and discuss four things taught by calling God our dwelling-place.  
 What is said about the unchangeableness of God?  
 What can you say about the eternal existence of God in the past?  
 Can you contrast the believer's position with that of the unbeliever on the existence of Mind and matter?

Can you compare this conception of God with that of the Mormon conception?  
**The Brevity and Frailty of Human Life**  
 What does our lesson teach about time in the conception of God?  
 What is meant by a watch in the night?  
 By what figures of speech is man's quick passing taught in this lesson?  
 How does the writer use grass to teach us of man's passing?  
 What two stories are used to teach us the passing of life in the evening?  
 What is meant by passing our days in God's wrath?  
 What is said of the average span of life and does that apply now?  
 What does the aged have of which to be proud?

**Prayer for Continued Favor**  
 With what does the writer ask to be satisfied?  
 Since he asked for it in the morning, what is suggested as preceding that morning?  
 What is said about a balance of joy and sorrow?  
 What is meant by God's work appearing?  
 What will that do for his servants?  
 On whom does the favor of God come?  
 Can we do enough to merit that favor?  
 What is meant by establishing our work upon us?  
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

## Lesson VI—August 5, 1956

### A SONG OF SAFETY

#### Lesson Text

Psalm 91: 1-9

1 He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

2 I will say of Je-ho'-vah, He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in whom I trust.

3 For he will deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, And from the deadly pestilence.

4 He will cover thee with his pinions, And under his wings shalt thou take refuge: His truth is a shield and a buckler.

5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the

terror by night, Nor for the arrow that flieth by day;

6 For the pestilence that walketh in darkness, Nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.

7 A thousand shall fall at thy side, And ten thousand at thy right hand; But it shall not come nigh thee.

8 Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold, And see the reward of the wicked.

9 For thou, O Je-ho'-vah, art my refuge! Thou hast made the Most High thy habitation;

**GOLDEN TEXT.**—*"There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy tent"* (Psalm 91: 10.)

**DEVOTIONAL READING.**—Psalm 95: 1-11.

#### Daily Bible Readings

July	30.	M.	The Lord Delivers Those Who Trust Him (Psalm 37: 3-40)
July	31.	T.	..... Jehovah Is About His People (Psalm 125: 1-5)
August	1.	W.	..... Promise of Peace (Phil. 4: 1-7)
August	2.	T.	..... Protection from Enemies (Heb. 13: 5-7)

August 3.	F.	The Lord Will Not Forsake (Deut. 31: 1-8)
August 4.	S.	For His Name's Sake (1 Sam. 12: 19-25)
August 5.	S.	No Harm to the Good (1 Pet. 3: 8-17)

TIME.—Unknown.

PLACE.—Unknown.

PERSONS.—Unknown.

### Golden Text Explained

1. No evil shall befall thee, (a) This promise is made to the man who has made the Most High his habitation. We have learned that to make God our habitation, or dwelling place, is to have him as our refuge from dangers and hardships which we alone are unable to meet. This part of our text is simply another statement of that promise of safekeeping for all who have Jehovah for a refuge, (b) In verse fourteen, we are told that these promises are made to people because they have set their love upon Jehovah. The protection of this eternal Refuge is made available to all who love the Lord and is a reward for their love and trust which they have placed in him. (c) But the question comes, Are those who love the Lord exempt from all sorrow and suffering? From history and personal experience we must say that love for God does not exempt people from suffering. But their love for him will be rewarded by giving them grace sufficient to use all those sorrows and hardships for their good and the glory of God. (2 Cor. 12: 9.) God chastens all whom he loves, but this chastening is for their good that they may be partakers of his holiness. (Heb. 12: 10.) That which is for our good cannot be classed as evil.

2. No plague shall come nigh thy tent, (a) This figure is suggested by the experiences of the Israelites in Egypt. (Ex. 8: 21-24.) After the third plague, the land of Goshen and God's people were exempt from the plagues; no plague came nigh their dwellings. (b) Tent versus habitation. There seems to be a difference between the habitation which is afforded the righteous and the tent in which he dwells. Different words are used in the Hebrew, as different as is the English translation. Habitation refers to the eternal God, the abiding refuge. Tent refers to a movable and frail dwelling place for a time. We have an earthly house or tabernacle, the body; we also have

a house eternal, not made with hands. (2 Cor. 5: 1ff.) So in this promise the Psalmist is giving assurance that God will care for this frail tent in which we live while on earth. Again we must make a difference between those sufferings which are for our good and such as Satan has the power to bring upon us if he were allowed to do so without restraint from God. (c) His angels will guard us. One reason given in the next verse why no evil will come near this tent is that he will give his angels charge over us to keep us in all our ways. They shall bear us up in their hands lest we dash our foot against stones. Though we allow for poetic expression, we cannot get away from the fact that angels have something to do with our safety.

3. Corresponding New Testament promises. Some are ready to say that these are all Old Testament texts and that we live in a different dispensation and have no such promises given to us. (a) Does not Jesus tell us to be not anxious about what we shall eat or what we shall wear because our heavenly Father knows that we have need of these things and will provide them if we seek him and his righteousness first? (Matt. 6: 25ff.) (b) And Paul confidently asserts that all things work together for good to them that love the Lord, to them that are called according to his purpose. (Rom. 8: 28.) This does not exempt us from sorrow or suffering, but it says that these things may be made to work for our good, (c) And we are told that God will not allow us to be tempted above our ability to bear, but will with the trial provide a way to escape that we may be able to bear it. (1 Cor. 10: 13.) (c) And we in this dispensation are told that angels are ministering spirits sent forth to serve us who shall be heirs of salvation. (Heb. 1: 14.) And angels attending little ones steadfastly behold the face of God. (Matt. 18: 10.)

## Introduction

When Jesus appeared to his apostles after his resurrection from the dead, he reminded them that he had said while with them "that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms" concerning him. (Luke 24: 44.) From this we may expect to find something in the book of Psalms concerning Jesus as the Messiah. (1) He is pictured to us as a suffering Saviour. Psalm 22 is second only to Isaiah 53 in describing the suffering Messiah. There are some who deny that this Psalm refers to the Messiah, but they cannot account for the fact that some of the words are applied to Jesus and even used by him on the cross. There are statements which apply to Jesus which, could not possibly apply to David, such as the pierced hands and feet, the parting of garments and casting lots for his vesture, and all the ends of the earth turning to Jehovah on account of his sufferings. Other passages may be cited. Psalm 2 tells of his sonship and as king in Zion; Psalm 41: 9 tells of his betrayal; 45: 7 speaks of his anointing; 22: 16 tells of his being nailed to the cross; 69: 21 says gall and vinegar were offered him; 34: 20 says not a bone was broken; 16: 10 says his flesh did not see corruption and he was raised; 68: 18 speaks of his ascension; 110: 1 says he is on the

right hand of God; 110: 4 says he is a priest after the order of Melchizedek. (2) But Jesus was more than a suffering Saviour; he was a conquering King, so Psalms tell us of him in his glory. Psalm 2 tells us that he was to be set over the kings of the earth and that he would have the nations for his inheritance; the kings and judges of the earth are advised to make their peace with him lest he be angry with them. The apostles recognized this Psalm as being fulfilled in their day. (Acts 4: 25ff.) Psalm 110 speaks of him as being King in Zion, ruling in the midst of his enemies at the same time he is priest after the order of Melchizedek. Several New Testament passages show that Jesus and his inspired apostles regarded this Psalm as prophetic. (Matt. 22: 44; Acts 2: 34; Heb. 1: 13.) (3) And the Psalms picture the kingdom of the Messiah as a growing, expanding kingdom. Psalm 2 promises him the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession; Psalm 45: 6, 7 says his government is righteous and all peoples in all generations will remember his name; Psalm 72: 8 predicts his dominion from sea to sea and from the River unto the ends of the earth. In many of the Psalms all the nations are exhorted to give up their idols and unite in their worship of the true God.

## Exposition of the Text

I. Safety With Confidence (Psalm 91: 1, 2)

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High. The secret place of Jehovah has occasioned a lot of discussion. Some think it means the Most Holy place in the tabernacle, or the temple. But no one dwelt there, not even the high priest who was allowed to go there occasionally. The secret place is that part of one's dwelling where only the most intimate friends may go; strangers, enemies, or occasional callers would not be invited to go there. This suggests that God's people may have (1) protection, for there he would be as safe as the one in whose dwelling he was sheltered. (2) Friendship with the one in whose dwelling he was staying. Those who are in the secret place of God are his friends. (3)

Confidence of the one in whose house one is sheltered. Certainly no one would allow men unworthy of his confidence to share the innermost recesses of his home. So when we are in the secret place of Jehovah, we enjoy his confidence. (4) Character. Since God is holy, it follows that none but those who are holy can have a place in his secret place. Through the mercy of God and the cleansing efficacy of the blood of Jesus we are made holy and can dwell in his secret place. (5) This Psalm suggests the idea of *dwelling* in the secret place of Jehovah. We do not just go there occasionally for a brief visit; we dwell there, it is our home. None can ask more; none can deserve as much.

Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. The shadow of the

Almighty is an expression denoting complete safety. And here again we have the idea of dwelling rather than an occasional visit. The term Almighty is a happy one in this connection, for it suggests the power of Jehovah to protect and care for those who dwell with him. This idea is expressed beautifully in these words: "Behold, he that keepeth Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. Jehovah is thy keeper: Jehovah is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. Jehovah will keep thee from all evil; he will keep thy soul. Jehovah will keep thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth and for evermore." (Psalm 121: 4-8.)

*I will say of Jehovah, he is my refuge and my fortress* A fortress is a fortified place and usually occupies a place difficult of approach. Jerusalem had such a location among the hills it was not taken from the Jebusites until the days of David. The writer has some such picture in mind when he speaks of Jehovah as his refuge and fortress. In another place he says, "Jehovah is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my rock, in whom I will take refuge; my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower. I will call upon Jehovah, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies." (Psalm 18: 2, 3.)

*My God, in whom I trust.* There are many things which encourage us to trust Jehovah as our rock, fortress, refuge, shield and horn of our salvation (1) His character. No one can read of the perfections of God without being impressed with the idea that he is worthy of absolute trust and confidence. He is holy, just, merciful, longsuffering, kind, patient; he is love; then he is all-wise, all-powerful, present everywhere to help when the help is most needed. He is just such a Being as one would wish to have as a helper and protector in times of trial and danger. (2) The testimony of others throughout all ages. The Bible is filled with the stories of men and women who trusted God for help. Not one single one put his trust in Jehovah ever regretted it; no one ever warned men against trusting him in times of sorrow or temptation. (3) Our own experience, though little in compari-

son with the accumulated experiences of the generations past, tells us that it is wise to put our trust in Jehovah. We have not been assured by an audible voice that it was he who carried us through some bitter experience in the past, or helped us meet an unusually hard temptation, but in our hearts we know that we could not have borne the trial as we did if we had been alone in the fight. So we walk in the faith that he has helped us in times past and we can depend on him in the future. (4) But most of all we have the assurance of his word in the New Testament that he cares for his children. "Casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you." (1 Pet. 5: 7.) "The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom." (2 Tim. 4: 18.) "And my God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4: 19.)

## II. Safety from Instruments of Destruction (Psalm 91: 3-6)

*He will deliver thee from the snare of the fowler.* A snare is a trap, a device for catching beasts or birds. Here it is used to suggest the wicked schemes and devices of Satan and evil men. Many and devious are the traps which are set for unsuspecting young people that they may be caught and held in the cords of sin. "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help is in the name of Jehovah, who made heaven and earth." (Psalm 124: 7, 8.) Since our Lord has been along the road and has been tempted in all points like as we are, he knows all the snares which may be set for us and is both willing and able to save us from them.

*And from the deadly pestilence.* Usually we take words in this portion of scripture in their primary meaning, and yet there are some which cannot be so taken. For instance, when Jehovah is said to be our Rock no one takes the word rock in its literal sense. And when we are told that Jehovah will save us from the snare of the fowler, surely no one thinks he is liable to be caught in a bird trap and would be so caught if it were not for the help of the Lord. So in this instance we

need not take the word pestilence in its literal meaning. Though undoubtedly the righteous could expect God to protect, in his own way, those who were exposed to pestilence, yet this seems not to be the thought here. As he saves us from the wicked devices of the devil and his helpers, which he calls a snare of the fowler, so he will save us from the deadly pestilence, or such influences as spread like a pestilence. Slander, gossip, evil reports, intrigue, and misrepresentations spread and poison the minds of people against us with rapidity and destructive force of a pestilence.

*He will cover thee with his pinions.* Sometimes this word means the whole wing, but at other times it refers to the feathers on the tip end of the wing. The King James Version has *feathers* instead of pinions. The thought is that, regardless of the dangers in which we find ourselves, Jehovah will care for us like the bird cares for her little ones, or the hen cares for her chickens.

*His truth is a shield and a buckler.* What the shield is to the soldier, truth is to the Christian soldier. Paul speaks of our faith being our shield (Eph. 6: 16.), but since faith comes from hearing the word, there could be no shield without the word of God. We need not be afraid of the enemy as long as we stand in the truth. One man with his feet planted firmly on the bedrock of truth can stand against a whole army who have nothing firmer than the shifting sand of human tradition upon which to stand. A buckler is a piece of armor to protect the chest, a coat of mail. This is simply an extension of the idea of the protection of the shield. We have complete protection in Jehovah as our shield and buckler.

*Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night.* The terror of the night is another instrument of destruction which has no power against us when Jehovah is our refuge and fortress. There are terrors in the day, even our fear of them is increased if they come in the night. Here again it is doubtful that the writer intends for us to take this in its literal meaning. Terrors of the night may well suggest underhanded machinations of evil men who plan and execute wicked schemes to bring about our downfall. The man who

puts his trust in Jehovah and lives an open upright life has nothing to fear, so that all who would say evil about him will be made ashamed. (Tit. 2: 8.)

*Nor for the arrow that flieth by day.* This suggests an enemy shooting in the day when he can be expected to see how to aim his arrow with precision. So whether our enemies try to ruin us by underhanded schemes or by direct shots made in the open, we will not fear if we have made Jehovah our refuge and fortress. The writer is using all the common situations of danger and all the usual instruments of destruction to show that the man who trusts in Jehovah will be safe. There is safety in the fellowship of God.

*Nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.* This is really a repetition of what has been said in the preceding verse, only the writer uses different figures. He says whether there comes against him the pestilence that walks about in the night or the destruction that stalks about in the open daylight, he will fear no evil because he has put his trust in Jehovah. There is little variation in thought in this whole Psalm, but the figures by which he puts his lesson across vary enough to keep our interest.

III. Safety Is in Jehovah (Psalm 91: 7-9)

*A thousand shall fall at thy side.* The writer is so confident of safety in his refuge and fortress that though a thousand fall at his side, or ten thousand at his right hand, he is sure he will be safe. Of course, we must suppose that those who fall at his side are among those who do not put their trust in Jehovah. Without making this supposition, we will either have a contradiction or we must conclude that the writer thinks God is a respecter of persons and will give him protection when he would refuse to give others in his class that same protection. Famine and the arrows of the wicked may take great toll of those who do not put their trust in Jehovah, but the one who trusts him will walk about in safety while others fall.

*But it shall not come nigh thee.* So safe is he who trusts in Jehovah that the dangers which take others will not even come nigh the trusting

soul. (1) This should move us to be more careful to put our trust in him, especially in times when we are afraid of the enemy. (2) This should move us to appreciate the goodness of God in giving us this protection, and such appreciation should lead us to serve him more faithfully. (3) Our interest in the welfare of others should move us to lead them to put their trust in Jehovah so they may enjoy this safety. Appreciation for our blessings should lead us to wish to share them with others. No one can be like Christ and fail to desire to share our spiritual blessings with others. (4) Our calm conduct amid dangers should be such as to cause others to wish to put their trust in Jehovah that they may be as calm in times of sorrow and dangers as we are.

*Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold, and see the reward of the wicked.* Those who fail to put their trust in Jehovah will fall around you; you will see them fall as a result of, or reward for, their wickednesses, but you will not experience it—only with your eyes shall you see it. This suggests that in God's moral government of this world there are some rewards for sin meted out here. We

see some men suffer when we have every right to know that the suffering was brought on by, or as a result of, their sins. Not all sin is punished in this life, nor is all good rewarded in this life. But much sin is punished and much good is rewarded in this life.

*For thou, O Jehovah, art my refuge!* This is the same idea as we had in the first verse of the text and the second. It is the idea emphasized all the way through the text. The central thought is that there is safety in Jehovah, and the writer has used many figures of speech to suggest possible enemies to all who would trust in him. And he has suggested means by which the Lord makes us able to meet these dangers. But whether the dangers are met through use of such provisions, or whether God in his providence shields us from those dangers, the writer ascribes all the praise to Jehovah for being a refuge and fortress in time of danger. We need to reflect on such matters more than we do. It will build faith and appreciation. Careful and prayerful reading of these Psalms will strengthen our spirituality.

### Lessons to Learn

1. There is no greater blessing or higher honor for man than to be allowed to dwell in the secret place of the Most High. But dwelling there obligates one to live in harmony with the wishes of Jehovah.

2. All the instruments of destruction which men can invent cannot hurt the man whose trust is in Jehovah, since Jehovah is wiser and stronger than all these enemies.

Surely the man who refuses to put his trust in God either does not recognize the dangers or does not believe in God.

3. Those who are observant should be aware of the truth that sin brings punishment and that righteousness brings its rewards in this life, which are but a foretaste and proof of the rich rewards and terrible punishment in the world to come.

### Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text

What do you know of the time, place, and persons of this lesson?

#### Golden Text Explained

On what condition is the promise of our text made to men?

Does this promise exempt the children of God from all suffering?

What is suggested by the word plague in our text?

What lesson is suggested by the contrast between tent and dwelling?

What is taught about the angels in connection with our protection?

What does the New Testament teach on this subject?

#### Introduction

What did Jesus say about prophecies in the Psalms concerning him?

What does Psalms teach about him as a suffering Saviour?

What is taught about Christ as the conquering King?

What is said about the growth of the Lord's kingdom?

#### Safety With Confidence

What is meant by the secret place of the

What lessons are suggested by this figure

What does the term Almighty suggest?

What blessing is suggested in the figure of a fortress?

State and discuss three things which encourage us to trust in Jehovah as our fortress?

Can you show that the New Testament teaches these same lessons?

#### Safety from Instruments of Destruction

What lesson is suggested by the snare of the fowler?

What is meant by the deadly pestilence? What is meant by covering one with his pinions?

What is said to be the shield of the one who trusts in God?

What is the buckler and what use is made of it in this lesson?

What use is made in this lesson of the dangers by night?

What danger of the day is mentioned?

Safety Is in Jehovah

What causes some to fall?

What should this safety in Jehovah cause us to do?

What should our interest in the welfare of others cause us to do?

How should our conduct during dangers affect others?

Can we see any evidence of the punishment of the wicked around us?

Is there any evidence of the reward of righteousness about us?

What is there of interest in lessons to learn?

## Lesson VII—August 12, 1956

### A PRAYER FOR JERUSALEM

#### Lesson Text

1 I was glad when they said <sup>Psalm 122: 1-9</sup> Judgment, The thrones of the house of David, 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

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.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Behold, he that keepeth Israel will neither slumber nor sleep." (Psalm 121: 4.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 126: 1-6.

#### Daily Bible Readings

August 6.	M.	City of the Great King (Psalm 48: 1-4)
August 7.	T.	Enemies Fear Jerusalem (Psalm 48: 5-8)
August 8.	W.	Jerusalem a Place of Rejoicing (Psalm 48: 11-14)
August 9.	T.	Lord Loved Jerusalem (Psalm 87: 1-4)
August 10.	F.	Great Blessing of Citizenship (Psalm 87: 5-7)
August 11.	S.	Jerusalem Trodden Down by Gentiles (Luke 21: 20-28)
August 12.	S.	The Heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12: 18-29)

TIME.—Unknown.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—David and "the tribes of Jehovah."

#### Golden Text Explained

1. The setting of our text. Some have supposed that this Psalm was composed by an exile who was looking back to Jerusalem and thinking of the safety of those who were so fortunate as to be in the holy hills and have God as his watchman. Others think it is a song composed by

one as he returned from captivity contemplating the joys he would have when he reached the hills he can see in the distance and from which he draws help and strength. While the words of the Psalm are such that they may well describe the feelings of a man in either situation, this song

is capable of a much wider meaning and application. The writer views the hills on which Jerusalem sits as the seat of Jehovah, and from these hills he draws his strength in time of trials and danger. Being on the hills, Jehovah is lifted up so as to have a view of all his people and may, therefore, perform his work as a watchman. So whether the writer was a returning exile, or a man in the time of David, he could look to the hills on which Jehovah dwelt for his help.

2. Jehovah is our watchman. Our text represents the keeper of Israel as neither slumbering nor sleeping. This suggests the idea of a watchman on guard for the safety of the people. One of the greatest dangers in such a situation is that the watchman will fall asleep and allow the enemy to gain an advantage. So necessary is it that the watchman keep awake that severe punishment is meted out to those who go to sleep at their post of duty. The prophet says the watchman who does not warn of the approach of the enemy will have the blood of the slain upon his hands. (Ezek. 33: 7-9.) But even though the watchman may keep awake, he may be so numb and inattentive on account of his desire for sleep that he will be incapable of doing his duty. But the writer of this song says the keeper of Israel, Jehovah, will neither slumber nor sleep. Again the watchman of an army cannot be in every place, so the enemy may watch for an opportunity to cross the line while the watchman is in another part of his beat. But Jehovah is omnipresent, everywhere at all times, so that he is always

aware of the presence of our enemies and capable of giving us the help we need to overcome them. (1 Cor. 10: 13.) And he knows all the forms evil can take so that he is not deceived as we are by the various enticing forms of evil. "Evil takes forms; it comes to us in every guise. Now it is prosperity, and now adversity; it may be an intoxicating approval and adulation, or it may be a crushing depreciation and desertion; it may be a strong and sudden assault on our integrity, or it may be the more perilous approach that which very gradually undermines or disintegrates."

3. Jehovah's faithfulness commends him as a watchman. Much is said in the Bible of the faithfulness of God. This suggests that he is absolutely dependable in every possible situation. His faithfulness is taught in such passages as Deut. 7: 9; 32: 4; 1 Cor. 1: 9; 10: 13; 2 Thess. 3: 3; 1 John 1: 9, and many other places. (1) His faithfulness is shown in keeping his promises with men. (Heb. 10: 23, 36, 37.) Solomon praised God for keeping his promises. (1 Kings 8: 23, 24, 56.) (2) God's faithfulness is shown in his shielding his people in times of temptation. (1 Cor. 10: 13; 2 Thess. 3: 3.) (3) God is faithful in answering the prayers of his people. (Psalm 143: 1, 2.) (4) God is faithful in forgiving his people when they ask for the forgiveness of their sins. (1 John 1: 9.) As a watchman he watches over his people for their welfare. He is faithful in all his relationships with his people and blessed is the man who has Jehovah for his watchman.

### Introduction

The writers of the book of Psalms recognize the sinfulness of men as well as the holiness of God. Often they assert their righteousness, but this is comparison with their enemies and is not the self-righteousness of the Pharisees of later times. Some of the greatest expressions of penitence are to be found in this book. There are seven songs devoted to expressions of repentance, and they are generally called the "penitential Psalms." They are Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143. The student will do well to study them carefully

and underline the words and phrases which are used to express sorrow for sin that he may learn how to confess his sins and ask forgiveness for the same. Psalm 38 abounds in expressions of sorrow for sin and shame for foolishness. "There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine indignation, neither is there any health in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over my head; as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds are loathsome and corrupt, because of my foolishness. I am

pained and bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. For my loins are filled with burning; and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am faint and sore bruised: I have groaned by reason of the disquietness of my heart." (Psalm 38: 3-8.)

Psalm 51 is David's prayer for forgiveness of his sin with Bathsheba and is the best known for expressing one's desire for mercy. He confesses his sin in these words: "For I know my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in thy sight." He begs for mercy and cleansing in these words: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. . . . Purify me with hyssop,

and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." He pleads for fellowship with God and the joy of communion in these words: "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with a willing spirit." In return for the blessing of forgiveness he pledges service in these words: "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. . . . My tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. . . . And my mouth shall show forth thy praise."

There is also the voice of victory over sin through the redeeming love and mercy of Jehovah. One cries from the depths of sin, and through the mercy and love of God he rises to the song of redemption for Israel from all their iniquities. (Psalm 130: 1-8.)

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Satisfaction Found in Jerusalem

(Psalm 122: 1, 2)

*I was glad when they said unto me.* This is an expression of joy at something which thrilled the writer. Character is revealed in the things which one enjoys. Paul prayed for a love that abounds in knowledge and discernment that he might approve of the things that are excellent. (Phil. 1: 9, 10.) One's holiness may be measured by the things he approves in his presence, the places of amusement and entertainments he frequents, the kind of company he keeps. The purity of one's heart may be measured by the kind of books and magazines one reads. So the things that thrill us, that give us genuine satisfaction and joy reveal a lot about our character.

*Let us go unto the house of Jehovah.* This is the thing that made the writer glad; this is the thing from which he got his greatest thrill, his most genuine satisfaction. Three times a year the males of Israel were to go to the tabernacle, and in later years to Jerusalem to the temple, to celebrate the annual feasts. (Lev. 23.) It became common for the whole family to go, as was the case of the family of Joseph when Jesus was a child. (Luke 2: 41-50.) And many scholars think that Psalms 120 through 134, each of which is called "A Song of Ascents," were written

to be sung as these groups of travelers went to Jerusalem to keep these annual feasts. Whether this is true or not, it certainly reveals the feelings of this writer, said to be David, with reference to his attachment to the place of worship. He was glad, thrilled, at the opportunity of going to the house of God, the place of worship. This feeling in the heart of all members of the church today would transform the church. (1) It would end disobedience to the commandment with reference to forsaking the assembly. (Heb. 10: 25.) People would cease to forsake the assembly if they felt glad when announcement is made that a religious service is to be conducted. (2) It would increase the attendance at all services, and especially Sunday and Wednesday nights. Some people go once a week because they are afraid they will be lost if they do not take the Lord's supper and make their contribution. It is very doubtful if such worship is acceptable to the Lord. (3) It would put more interest and fervency in the worship. People who now sit on the back seat and take no part in the worship would be anxious to get as near the front as possible and to take a part personally in the worship. They would desire to have some responsibility for the proper conduct of the programs of worship. (4) It would

cause all of God's children to prefer worship to worldly entertainment. Television is coming to be a real threat to church attendance. Entertainers who draw the biggest salaries and who are counted as the best drawing cards in the business have their programs in the evenings at about the same time church people are supposed to go to the church house for worship. Many weak members think they have done all the Lord requires of them for the whole week when they worshiped Sunday morning, so they stay at home and enjoy the worldly entertainment with friends. They are not glad for an opportunity to go to the house of the Lord, not as glad as they are to enjoy that worldly entertainment. The love of the world and the things of the world is destroying them, and all the while they think they have done what they have to do to keep out of hell by attending church Sunday morning.

*Our feet are standing within thy gates, O Jerusalem.* (1) This denotes safety. The pilgrim has come to worship; he has been exposed to danger along the way, as well as hardships of the journey. Now he stands within the gates of the city of God where he is protected by the walls and by the very presence of Jehovah in the Most Holy place. (2) It suggests a satisfied soul. The soul who has longed for the fellowship of his brethren and the communion of the Lord as he journeyed toward the city is now standing within the gates and, having reached the place for which he has struggled, he is completely satisfied. (3) This suggests what the writer thinks is worth while. He prefers to have the fellowship of his brethren and the communion of the Lord rather than enjoy the things of the world outside the city. It is easy to make the spiritual applications of these matters in our own lives today. We find safety in Christ; we find satisfaction in him, if we long for the things which are heavenly; we find the things which are worth while to us if we have set our affections on things that are above. (Col. 3: 1-3.)

## II. Jerusalem the Center of Religious Activity (Psalm 122: 3-5)

*Jerusalem, thou art builded.* The primary reference here is to the way the city was built. There was never

an unlimited amount of ground on which to build, as is the case in most of our western cities. Deep valleys and steep hills on three sides, and the wall enclosing it restricted its size. So houses were joined together until it looked like the whole was compacted together. Viewed from a distance it seemed as one great building, except for the towers and a few buildings which rose above the average. But the writer had something more in mind than the physical compactness of the city. (1) This suggests the safety of the place. Being within the walls and so compacted together as to suggest one great house, the citizens of this city had a sense of security which one outside the walls could not have. So that one which has come to spiritual Zion which the Lord has built has a sense of security which one cannot have outside of this heavenly building. (2) This suggests fellowship. People who live great distances from each other are denied that intimate fellowship and association which is enjoyed by those who live near each other. This was especially true in the days before our modern means of transportation and communication became the common possession of practically all of us. As those in the compact city of Jerusalem enjoyed this fellowship, so those who are in the heavenly Zion enjoy a fellowship which is not known to those outside.

*Whither the tribes go up.* This is one statement relied on to prove that this Psalm was written in the time of David and not about the time of the return of the Jews from captivity. Here is a suggestion of all the tribes going up to Jerusalem for the three great annual feasts, Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. After the ten tribes were taken into Assyria never to return, this statement would hardly be in place. This verse suggests Jerusalem as the center of Jewish worship, hence it was written after the time David was made king of all Israel and after he took Jerusalem from the Jebusites and had moved the ark of the covenant into the city. This going up annually was in keeping with the commandment of Moses, when he said, "Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before Jehovah thy God in the place which he shall choose: in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of

weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles; and they shall not appear before Jehovah empty: every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of Jehovah thy God which he hath given thee." (Deut. 16: 16, 17.) And the tribes had the assurance of Jehovah that no nation would desire their land while they were gone on these three journeys. (Ex. 34: 23, 24.)

*For an ordinance for Israel.* In the margin, as well as in other versions, we have the word *testimony* instead of *ordinance*. If we retain the word *ordinance*, the meaning is that the twelve tribes of Jehovah go up to Jerusalem in harmony with the law given by Moses and in keeping with the "prescribed practice or usage" of the people. If we take the word *testimony*, the meaning is that the twelve tribes of Jehovah went up to Jerusalem as a testimony to the fact that the people of Israel had special blessings from Jehovah, and that these blessings were to be enjoyed in the city where Jehovah had placed his name.

*To give thanks unto the name of Jehovah.* The three annual feasts were largely periods of praise and thanksgiving. Passover was a time of remembering their deliveries from the bondage of Egypt, a time of rejoicing in their freedom from slavery. Pentecost was a time of thanksgiving for the first fruits of the harvest. Tabernacles was a feast of thanksgiving for the ingathering of all their harvest and for the provident care of the Lord for them while they were in the wilderness living in tents. During this feast they lived in booths made of branches of trees so they could impress their children with the goodness of God in taking care of them when they were in the wilderness without houses in which to live. To give thanks to the name of Jehovah is simply another way of saying that they gave thanks to Jehovah. We have the same forms in the New Testament, as baptizing into the name of the Father, etc. (Matt. 28: 19.) And we are said to be saved in the name of Christ (Acts 4:12), which is the same as saying we are saved in Christ.

*For there are set thrones for judgment.* Jerusalem was not only the center of Israel's religious activities, but it was also capital of the nation.

There the people went to settle their disputes, and judgment was to be dispensed without partiality. There was little distinction between "church and state." It is true that the priests of the tribe of Levi were in charge of the tabernacle, and later of the temple, while David and his descendants of the tribe of Judah were on the throne. But David had much to do with the order of temple worship, for he divided the priests into courses. (1 Chron. 23: 6ff.) And high priests were prominent in government circles, the Lord often revealing his will concerning matters of government through them. (1 Kings 17: 15ff.)

*The thrones of the house of David.* David and his descendants were to rule in Jerusalem. Men of other tribes and families ruled in the northern kingdom, in Samaria, but no other tribe or family ever ruled in Jerusalem. This was in fulfillment of the prophecy of Jacob, saying, "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 people be." (Gen. 49: 10.) And when we read of the tabernacle of David being repaired, we learn that a son of David is placed on the throne. This expression is used with reference to Jesus being placed on the throne of David that the Gentiles may receive blessings. (Acts 15: 13ff.)

### III. Seeking the Peace and Prosperity of Jerusalem (Psalm 122: 6-9)

*Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.* Those who love the Lord would wish to pray for the peace and prosperity of Jerusalem, the city where Jehovah's name was recorded and where he was worshiped. The peace of the city would mean that they would continue to be afforded a place of worship and of fellowship with one another. This should teach us to pray for the church. (1) We should pray for the purity of the church. The church must remain pure both doctrinally and morally if it pleases the Lord. And when people have so little interest in the purity of the church that none will pray for it, we may expect the church to cease to be pure in these respects. Do you ever pray for the purity of the church? (2) We must pray for

the unity of the church. A lack of purity in doctrine and practice can result in division and so destroy the unity of the church. Selfishness, love of preeminence, and a determination to have one's way can destroy the unity of the church. We should be interested enough in the peace of the church that we will refrain from these things ourselves and pray that others will do the same. (3) We should pray for the growth of the church. The growth of the church numerically means more saved people. Jesus said for us to pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth workers into his harvest. (Matt. 9: 38.) We should also pray for the growth of the church in a spiritual sense. We are growing so rapidly now in numbers that many fear we are not assimilating that growth and that we are suffering a spiritual decline. Certainly there is more danger of worldliness in the church when it is growing rapidly in numbers. We need to be very concerned about the spiritual development of each individual member as well as the growth of the body in numbers.

*They shall prosper that love thee.* To love Jerusalem carried with it the thought of honoring Jehovah whose name was placed there and whose worship was carried on in the temple. And those who love and honor God and the city where he is worshiped will prosper. The lesson this suggests today for us is that, if we place our minds on heavenly things, we will prosper spiritually. Heaven is the dwelling place of God, our citizenship is there. (Phil. 3: 20.) And when we love the church and all things of a heavenly nature, we are going to grow spiritually.

*Peace be within thy walls.* Peace and prosperity are naturally linked together, while war and adversity keep company. The writer knows if peace is within the walls of the city, there will be prosperity within the

palaces. We might also make an application of this to the church today. If there is peace and harmony within the church, there will be growth spiritually and numerically—and to the church this is prosperity. So we should pray for peace to reign within the boundaries of the church in order that it may prosper.

*For my brethren and companions' sakes.* The writer of this song did not have a mean and selfish spirit, for he would pray for the peace of Jerusalem for the sake of his brethren. He was interested in the welfare of others and was willing to do something definite to better their condition. We need to develop an unselfish attitude; we should be willing to work and pray that others might be saved and that they might enjoy the good things of life here and hereafter. Jesus was so interested in our betterment that he left heaven to come to this world of sin and sorrow to suffer death on the cross that we might be blessed. If we cultivate his spirit of interest in and labor for others, we will be found working and praying for their happiness.

*For the sake of the house of Jehovah.* Not only was the writer of this song interested in the good of his brethren, he also had the welfare of the house of God at heart. He would pray for the peace and prosperity of Jerusalem because the house of Jehovah was situated there. He did not want anything to happen to Jerusalem which would tend to destroy the house of Jehovah. We should pray that nothing shall happen to our country or community that will tend to hurt the church or impede its growth. We are all anxious that nothing will happen to hinder our financial prosperity, or that of our friends. We should be even more anxious about the peace and prosperity of the church, and we will be if we love the church as much as we should love it.

### Lessons to Learn

1. Blessed is the man who finds his greatest pleasure in worshipping and serving God. We find it difficult to do the things from which we get little or no pleasure, so unless we find pleasure in worship and service we will not long continue in such activities.

2. Jerusalem was counted a fortunate city because the house of Je-

hovah was there. Any community is blessed when the church of the Lord is established there and is carrying on a good program of work and worship.

3. We should pray for the peace and prosperity of the church. Our heavenly mindedness may be measured by the amount of time we spend in prayer for these things.

## Questions for the Class

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

### Golden Text Explained

What do you know of the setting of the text?  
What figure of speech does our text suggest with reference to Jehovah?  
What characteristics enable Jehovah to be a watchman?  
How is God's faithfulness manifested to his people?

### Introduction

How many "penitential Psalms"?  
What do you know of their content?  
In which Psalm is David's prayer for forgiveness?  
In what words does he plead for mercy and fellowship?  
In what words does he pledge his service to God?  
What is said in Psalms about man's victory over sin?

### Satisfaction Found in Jerusalem

Of what was the writer of this song glad?  
How may one's holiness be measured?  
State and discuss four things such a feeling of joy would do for the church today.  
Name and discuss some things which are real threats to church attendances today.  
State and discuss three things suggested by the writer's feet being in Jerusalem.

Jerusalem the Center of Religious Activity  
What is said of the manner in which Jerusalem was built?  
What two things are suggested by the figure of compactness of the city?  
What is suggested about the date of this Psalm in that tribes went up to Jerusalem for worship?  
To what feasts did they go?  
What of their safety while going?  
What is meant by their going up for worship being an ordinance for Israel?  
What is the connection between the feasts and thanksgiving to Jehovah?  
What is meant by thrones of judgment being in Jerusalem?  
In whose house were these thrones set?  
In whose house is the throne of Christ?

### Seeking the Peace and Prosperity of Jerusalem

Why did the writer pray for the peace of Jerusalem?  
Discuss our prayers for the purity, the unity, and the growth of the church.  
What blessing was promised those who loved Jerusalem?  
If peace was within the walls, what was in the palaces of Jerusalem?  
For whose sake did the writer pray for the peace of the city?  
What lesson on unselfishness is suggested in this lesson?  
Why should we pray for the peace of our nation and community?  
What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

## Lesson VIII—August 19, 1956

### A SONG OF PRAISE

#### Lesson Text

Psalm 148: 1-14

1 Praise ye Je-ho'-vah. Praise ye Je-ho'-vah from the heavens: Praise him in the heights.

2 Praise ye him, all his angels: Praise ye him, all his host.

3 Praise ye him, sun and moon: Praise him, all ye stars of light.

4 Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, And ye waters that are above the heavens.

5 Let them praise the name of Je-ho'-vah; For he commanded, and they were created.

6 He hath also established them for ever and ever: He hath made a decree which shall not pass away.

7 Praise Je-ho'-vah from the earth, Ye sea-monsters, and all deeps;

8 Fire and hail, snow and vapor;

Stormy wind, fulfilling his word;

9 Mountains and all hills; Fruitful trees and all cedars;

10 Beasts and all cattle; Creeping things and flying birds;

11 Kings of the earth and all peoples; Princes and all judges of the earth;

12 Both young men and virgins; Old men and children:

13 Let them praise the name of Je-ho'-vah; For his name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and the heavens.

14 And he hath lifted up the horn of his people, The praise of all his saints; Even of the children of Israel-el, a people near unto him. Praise ye Je-ho'-vah.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Sing unto Jehovah a new song, and his praise in the assembly of the saints"* (Psalm 149: 1b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 149: 1-9.

### Daily Bible Readings

August 13.	M	.....	A Worthy Lamb (Rev. 5: 9-14)
August 14.	T	.....	Angels Praise the Lamb (Rev. 7: 9-17)
August 15.	W	.....	Joyful Noise to God (Psalm 66: 1-10)
August 16.	T	.....	Good to Praise Jehovah (Psalm 147: 1-6)
August 17.	F	.....	Reasons for Praise (Psalm 147: 12-20)
August 18.	S	.....	Jehovah Praised for Goodness (Psalm 145: 1-21)
August 19.	S	.....	Praise Ye Jehovah (Psalm 146: 1-10)

TIME.—About 519 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—All creatures in heaven and on earth.

### Golden Text Explained

1. Jehovah is worthy of praise. All of us know that Jehovah is worthy of all the honor, glory, and praise we can possibly give him, but it is good for us to think upon the reasons why he is worthy of such; we cannot do so too often for our own good. The writer assigns several reasons why Jehovah is worthy of all praise and honor in the verses that follow our text. (1) Because he made us. "Let Israel rejoice in him that made him," while this may refer to Israel as a nation, and the people were to rejoice that Jehovah had made them a nation and was using that nation for his glorious purposes, it is still a fact that God made each one of us and has led us in his providence to be his children. We have an eternal obligation to praise him for his goodness in so doing. (2) Because he rules over us. "Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King." Jehovah is the sovereign Ruler of the universe. In his providence he rules over the details of our lives and makes all things work together for our good, if we love him and seek his righteousness. We should praise him for his goodness, mercy, and love in caring for us both day and night. (3) Because he takes pleasure in us. "For Jehovah taketh pleasure in his people." Jehovah takes delight in his people; he is not ashamed to be called their God. (Heb. 11: 16.) If he can forgive us for the many sins of which we have been guilty, overlook our frailty and oft repeated mistakes on account of our ignorance and weakness, and still find delight and satisfaction in being our God, we certainly are obligated to praise him, love him, and serve him as long as we live. (4) Because he beautifies the meek. "He will beautify the meek with salvation." Salvation is

looked upon here as a garment, and this is not a new figure. (Psalm 132: 16; Isa. 61: 3.) The meek have always been favored of the Lord. (Psalm 37: 11; 25: 9; 76: 9; 147: 6; Matt. 5: 5.)

2. New manifestations of his goodness call for new songs. Old songs of praise inspired by a show of God's mercy to the fathers are good, but if we appreciate the goodness and mercy of God as manifested to us, we will want to put our praise into new words suited to the experiences through which we have gone. This Psalm in which our text is found was written upon the return of the Jews from Babylon, and the song of praise for deliverance from Egypt would hardly be appropriate to express their feelings. So as we experience afresh the goodness of God, there is need for new songs of praise to celebrate and perpetuate the memory of those blessed events. Composing such songs requires (1) deep and lasting appreciation of God's goodness. Many people take God's goodness as something to which they are entitled and so do not see in it an act of grace and mercy. (2) It requires long and deep meditation. Great songs do not happen; they are not the overflow of shallow, flitting, frivolous minds. Most of us cannot exercise the mental discipline necessary to compose new songs in praise to God. (3) Rich experiences. Usually great songs that live for several generations are the result of some unusually rich experience on the part of the writer. The writers of the Psalms celebrated their experiences with God and their fellow man. And since their experiences were similar to ours, they continue to live and serve us as a means of expressing our feelings in similar circumstances.

3. For edification of the assembly. The writer tells us to sing this new song in the assembly of the saints. Certainly he did not intend for the writer to make a show of his ability; it was to be sung there for the edification and encouragement of the

saints. We are to teach and admonish one another in song. (Col. 3: 16.) The Psalms were used for this purpose throughout the Old Testament era, and many of them are still usable for praise and prayer in this Christian age.

### Introduction

One of the greatest problems of the student of the Psalms is what use to make of the Psalms of imprecation, or curses invoked upon enemies. The student should read Psalms 7, 35, 55, 56, 59, 69, 79, 83, 109, and 137; give special notice to 35: 19-28; 69: 22-28; 109: 6-20.

Some think that these Psalms are of a national character and that the curses invoked are calls for vengeance, not upon personal enemies, but the enemies of the nation and of God. There is some basis for this, but it is not strictly true in every case. Some have said that these are *predictions* of what is to come upon the wicked, not prayers of the individuals writing them. Others say they are in keeping with the spirit of the times and in harmony with the Old Testament teaching of the individual's attitude toward his enemies. While the practical result of the teaching of the law as to treatment of enemies, especially the seven nations of Canaan, was to hate and destroy them (Matt. 5: 43), there are many passages in the law which demand love and kindness (Ex. 23: 4, 5; Lev. 19: 17, 18). Then others say that David is the author of most of these Psalms of imprecation and that he was acting in his official capacity as ruler of the people, and as such he worked and prayed for the destruction of the enemies of the nation and of all good people.

There is some truth in all these explanations, but likely no one of them is a sufficient explanation; and certainly no one of them can be used to justify the sentiments expressed from a Christian point of view. The sentiment breathed in them is contrary to the spirit of Christianity and the attitude of a Christian toward his enemies. But we must remember that Jesus had not yet preached the Sermon on the Mount nor fully revealed the character of God as he did while he lived among men. We should also remember that these sentiments are expressed in poetry and that the writers were fond of hyperbole, or extreme expressions. While David uttered most of them, he was a kindly, sympathetic man; note his attitude toward Saul, who tried to kill him, and toward Absalom, who tried to take his throne from him. Furthermore, men of those times had not learned to distinguish between the sin and the sinner as the gospel enables us to do. And it is possible that they did not make a clear distinction between immediate punishment for sin and the punishment reserved for the sinner in the next life. They did not have the clear views of the future life that we have, and whatever punishment for sin was due, from their point of view, must come in this life.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. AH Heaven Is to Praise Jehovah

(Psalm 148: 1-6)

*Praise ye Jehovah from the heavens.* The writer begins with the general and then proceeds to the particular; he calls upon all heavens to praise Jehovah before he points out the different realms and personages. This suggests that Jehovah is above all and is worthy of praise from all creation. This should remind us of what an exalted honor and privilege we poor erring mortals have in prais-

ing him. Surely if all heaven is busy praising him, he is not so suffering from a lack of praise that he would desire praise from us. That he is willing to turn part of his attention toward us and listen to our poor praise while all heaven rings with praise and adoration is cause for great rejoicing on our part. And he who despises this privilege so that he does not grasp and use the opportunity offers a great insult to him who can well get along without it.

*Praise ye him, all his angels.* Angels are created beings, but when they were created we are not told. They were present to shout with joy when the foundations of the earth were laid. (Job 38: 6, 7.) We read of "dominions, principalities, and powers" in heavenly places and other terms which suggest many ranks and orders of angels. We read of an archangel. (Jude 9; 1 Thess. 4: 16.) And we are told that angels are "greater in might and power" than men. (2 Pet. 2: 11.) They steadfastly behold the face of our Father who is in heaven. (Matt. 18: 10.) And they are ministering spirits sent forth to do service to those who shall be heirs of salvation. (Heb. 1: 14.) Elsewhere David says, "Bless Jehovah, ye his angels, that are mighty in strength, that fulfil his word, hearkening unto the voice of his word." (Psalm 103: 20.) They ministered to the Lord in his last hours, and are said to encamp round about the saints. (Psalm 34: 7; 91: 11.) But regardless of their rank or order, of their office or strength, all of them are called upon to praise Jehovah for the fact that he created them and keeps them. They are expected to obey him, and when they fail so to do, they are not allowed to keep their first estate. (Jude 6; 2 Pet. 2: 4.) If such beings as the angels are required to obey God and give praises to him, certainly we frail, faulty, faltering creatures of flesh and blood are obligated to do so.

*Praise ye him, all his host.* Whether the host is separate from the angels in the preceding line is difficult to determine. Some scholars say this refers to angels of the lowest rank, the armies of heaven. We have the same distinction between the angels and the hosts that do God's pleasure in Psalm 103: 20, 21. In this passage angels are spoken of as hearing God's voice, while the hosts are said to do his will. Again this may be a variation of words to express the same thought, but since the word angel means *messenger*, it may be that one order of angels hears his voice and delivers his message, while the hosts are another division of servants who perform a different type of service. The writer is simply covering the whole range of heavenly beings and laying them

all under obligation to give praises to Jehovah.

*Praise ye him, sun and moon.* Now he turns to the inanimate creatures of the heavens. They are called upon to praise Jehovah. This can be done only by their performing all the duties which their Creator has laid upon them. Likewise the "stars of light" that twinkle in the night can praise him by declaring as they shine that the hand that made them is divine. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork." (Psalm 19: 1) "And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Jehovah; thy faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones." (Psalm 89: 5.) And when the heavens declare his righteousness (Psalm 97: 6; 50: 6), they are giving him the praise that is due him.

*Ye waters that are above the heavens.* We read of the waters in creation being divided, water being below the firmament and above the firmament. (Gen. 1: 7.) And God is said to lay the beams of his chamber, or dwelling place, in these waters. (Psalm 104: 3.) Pulpit Commentary says "clouds are probably intended." But whether we know anything about the waters above the firmament or not, we know the writer intends for us to get the idea that Jehovah is worthy of praise from all his creation, whether animate or inanimate.

*For he commanded, and they were created.* This is an inspired explanation of the existence of all the material universe. God spoke, they existed. "By the word of Jehovah were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. . . . For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." (Psalm 33: 6, 9.) "By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which appear." (Heb. 11:3.) The infidel scientist would have us believe that all this material universe with which we find ourselves surrounded came into being by a gradual process of evolution. He does not know how, when, nor where it all started, but if you give him a little bit of *matter*, lifeless matter, he can, by ballooning a figment of his imagination, account for all he sees. But he cannot account, even to his

own satisfaction, for how that little bit of lifeless matter came into existence. How much more sensible and reasonable it is to take the Psalmist's word for it—"he commanded, and they were created." This agrees with the account of creation given by Moses—"God said, Let there be light. . . . Let there be a firmament. . . . Let the earth bring forth living creatures. . . . Let us make man in our image." (Gen. 1: 3ff.) All we see about us was not made of things which appear, but was spoken into existence by the infinite power of Jehovah. This is ground for praise from all his creatures.

*He hath also established them for ever.* By his power he upholds all things. (Col. 1: 17; Heb. 1: 3.) He gave laws for the perpetuation of all living creatures. (Gen. 1: 11.) He has given the planets their courses to follow and the seas and oceans have their bed, or path, in which they flow and he determined their boundaries. (Job 38: 8ff.) The philosophy of this Psalm is the opposite of Pantheism. Pantheism says "the universe, taken or conceived of as a whole is God; the doctrine that there is no God but the combined forces and laws which are manifested in the existing universe." (Webster.) The Psalm teaches that God is separate from the universe, that he is in all parts thereof to uphold, that he created all by his word, and that he rules over all the universe.

## II. Lower Creatures of Earth to

Praise Jehovah (Psalm 148: 7-10)

*Praise Jehovah from the earth.*

Having called upon all heaven and heavenly creatures to give praise to Jehovah, the writer now turns his attention to the earth. Surely if heavenly creatures in all their glory are obligated to praise Jehovah as being above them, we worms of the dust should feel an obligation to praise him, and feel that we are honored above our deservings that we have the privilege of doing so.

*Ye sea-monsters, and all deeps.* By sea-monsters is meant all the large marine life. The word *deeps* likely refers to all the creatures which inhabit the deepest parts of the seas and oceans. Men have discovered many wonderful types of marine life, some of which cannot exist out of the deeps, their bodies being ac-

customed to the terrific pressure of the deep. The reader should read Job 38 through 41 to learn with Job the wonders of God's creation in the seas, on land, and in the air. He will be better prepared to render due praise unto Jehovah after a careful study of the things presented in these chapters.

*Fire and hail, snow and vapor.* The writer now turns to the atmosphere surrounding the earth and deals with those things in the atmosphere which affect the earth. The fire of this verse refers to lightning which accompanies the hail. The vapor is the mist that accompanies the snow, or low-flying clouds. And he adds stormy wind, and suggests that all of them fulfil his word, or obey his laws. Job praises God for making a decree for the rain and a "way for the lightning." (Job 28: 26.) He also says that God sends forth his lightning unto the ends of the earth, and he tells the snow and rain to fall on the earth, even where no one is living. (Job 37: 3ff; 38: 25ff.) By obeying the laws of God these forces of nature praise the power that controls them. May we not learn a lesson from these forces of nature and learn that we can praise our Maker by doing his will and serving his purposes on earth?

*Mountains and all hills.* If this Psalm was written by one returned from Babylonian exile, he would very naturally enjoy the view of the mountains and hills of Palestine in contrast with the flat river bottom land where he had spent his exile. If there is anything on earth which deserves praise for their show of strength, durability, beauty, and majesty, surely it is the great mountains piercing the very sky with their lofty peaks. But this writer calls upon them to give praise to Jehovah without a thought that they are elevated above the lowliest creature in the dust of the earth. From our point of view there is a vast amount of difference between the mountain and the flea, but when compared with God there is very little, if any, difference. One is as dependent upon Jehovah as the other, and one is as much bound to praise Jehovah as the other.

*Fruitful trees and all cedars.* Whether a tree is for fruit or shade: whether it sustains the life of man or shelters him from the cold and

heat, all trees are to give praise to their Maker.

*Beasts and all cattle.* We leave the inanimate creation to come to the animate. They too are called upon to give praise to the all-wise Creator. Some have suggested that by beasts the writer means all wild beasts and by cattle he means all domesticated beasts. As it would be impossible in one short song to mention all living creatures, such grouping would be very natural.

*Creeping things and flying birds.* Here the writer brings in two more great divisions of God's creatures. The first would include all the little creatures that move about on the face of the earth, or in the dust of the earth; the latter would include all creatures with wings to move about in the air. Thus in one sentence the Psalmist calls upon a big portion of creation to give praise to the Maker of us all.

### III. All Mankind to Praise Jehovah

(Psalm 148: 11-14)

*Kings of the earth and all peoples.* The rulers as well as those ruled are to join with the rest of nature in giving praise to their maker and preserver. The intelligent as well as those creatures lacking intelligence are called upon to give praise to him from whom all blessings both good and perfect flow. There is no king so high and mighty but that he owes praise to Jehovah; there is no person so lowly and insignificant but that Jehovah is pleased to receive his praise and adoration. And from Jehovah's point of view, as he looks down from heaven, there is mighty little difference between the king and his most lowly subject; the mountain and the ant hill look about alike to God.

*Princes and all judges of the earth.* Paul tells us there is no power but that which is of God. (Rom. 13: 1) And Nebuchadnezzar learned that God sets up kings and their kingdoms, and he gives the throne to whomsoever he will. (Dan. 4: 17, 25.) Since the Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men, it is fitting that all who exercise power over their fellow men should recognize the sovereignty of Jehovah and give him due praise and respect. There is something about the exercise of power, authority, which is dangerous

for men. It tends to cultivate a proud and haughty spirit; it robs men of mercy and sympathy, and encourages cruelty and oppression. When rulers and judges forget that they are under God as the supreme Ruler and forget that they are to rule their people in harmony with God's law, they usually become despotic and oppressive. If they will remember Jehovah and give him the honor and praise due him, they will work for the best interests of their people.

*Both young men and virgins.* Young people in the morning of life are called upon to praise Jehovah. They have been endowed with mental and physical vigor which will be used in service to the Lord or to the devil. The devil has no reasonable claim to their strength and if they give it to him it will be worse than wasted. Since God gave them that vigor and vitality, they are obligated to use it for him, and if they will do so, they will accomplish the most possible in life and will be rewarded in the world to come. If young people can be made to realize that serving God is for their best interests both here and hereafter, more of them would be found serving him and giving him his due praise.

*Old men and children.* The writer is careful to include all humanity. Aged people who by experience or observation have learned the folly of sin and who have not many days to stay here before they go to meet their maker and judge should certainly be expected to praise and adore Jehovah for his mercies in giving them long life with its attendant blessings. Children who have not had time to be defiled by sin can offer the purest of praise to Jehovah. The aged, the youth, and all between should unite in one continual paean of praise to Jehovah, for his goodness and mercy endureth for ever; "his name alone is exalted: his glory is above the earth and the heavens."

*He hath lifted up the horn of his people.* Lifting up the horn is a figure for giving peace, prosperity and power. In spite of the fact that Jehovah is so exalted and mighty, so worthy of praise and adoration he has not forgotten his people nor has he been robbed of his mercy and goodness. He will bless his people with all things good for them.

*The praise of all his saints.* This is capable of more than one interpretation, but the one in harmony with the context is that lifting up the horn of his people gives that people an occasion, a reason, for giving Jehovah his praise.

*A people near unto him.* Israel is spoken of as a people near to Jehovah because he chose them for a

special purpose and watched over them with a special providence. Fleshly Israel is no longer nearer to him than other races, but he has a people near to him and blessed of him in a peculiar way. That people is spiritual Israel, the church, his family. This gives the church reason for continual praise and adoration and thanksgiving.

### Lessons to Learn

1. One great avenue of praise to Jehovah is in song. Churches should be taught the importance of the song service; they should be trained to sing meaningfully.

2. Our song services are interrupted, in many places, by people coming into the auditorium and crowding past people on the end of

the pew. We should no more think of entering the place of worship during singing than during prayer.

3. Since singing praise occupies our minds and fills them with pure thoughts, the more our young people sing, the more they are thinking pure thoughts.

### Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

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

#### Golden Text Explained

State and discuss four reasons why Jehovah is worthy of praise.

Why are we to sing new songs of praise? State and discuss three things essential in composing songs that live.

Why do the Psalms live through all generations?

Why are songs to be sung in the assembly?

#### Introduction

What is a Psalm of imprecation?

Cite a number of such Psalms.

As time permits, read certain portions of these and discuss the sentiments in the light of Christian principles.

Discuss some explanations suggested and others which the class may suggest.

Can you show that David, the writer of these Psalms was not a vengeful character?

#### All Heaven Is to Praise Jehovah

Who in this Psalm is first called upon to praise Jehovah?

What do you know of the different ranks of angels and of their work?

What is meant by the host of heaven?

Do they differ from angels mentioned?

How do the sun and moon praise Jehovah?

What do you know of the waters above the heavens?

How does the Psalmist explain the presence of the universe?

Can you show that this is more reasonable than the infidel's explanation?

Can you contrast Pantheism with the philosophy of the Psalmist?

#### Lower Creatures of Earth to Praise Jehovah

How does our relation to heavenly beings obligate us to praise Jehovah?

What is said of the creatures of the sea? What is said of the things in the atmosphere?

Mountains are regarded as symbols of what?

What vegetable life is mentioned in our text?

What brute creations are laid under obligation to praise Jehovah?

What mention is made of the smaller creation?

#### All Mankind to Praise Jehovah

Does God require more of those ruled than he does of the rulers?

Why are rulers under special obligation to praise Jehovah?

Why is the exercise of authority over other men dangerous?

Why should young people be careful to give praise to Jehovah?

Why should old people be expected to know to praise Jehovah?

What is meant by lifting up the horn of his people?

What is said of Israel's relation to Jehovah?

Is there a people today who can claim to be near Jehovah?

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

## Lesson IX—August 26, 1956

## THE REWARDS OF OBEDIENCE

## Lesson Text

Prov. 3: 1-12

1 My son, forget not my law; But let thy heart keep my commandments:

2 For length of days, and years of life, And peace, will they add to thee.

3 Let not kindness and truth forsake thee: Bind them about thy neck; Write them upon the tablet of thy heart:

4 So shaft thou find favor and good understanding In the sight of God and man.

5 Trust in Je-ho'-vah with all thy heart, And lean not upon thine own understanding:

6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, And he will direct thy paths.

7 Be not wise in thine own eyes; Fear Je-ho'-vah, and depart from evil:

8 It will be health to thy navel, And marrow to thy bones.

9 Honor Je-ho'-vah with thy substance, And with the first-fruits of all thine increase:

10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, And thy vats shall overflow with new wine.

11 My son, despise not the chastening of Je-ho'-vah; Neither be weary of his reproof:

12 For whom Je-ho'-vah loveth he reproveth, Even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy paths."* (Prov. 3: 6.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Prov. 3: 13-26.

## Daily Bible Readings

August 20.	M.	Beautiful on the Mountains (Isa. 52: 7-10)
August 21.	T.	The Roe and the Hunter (Prov. 6: 1-5)
August 22.	W.	Vineyards in Blossom (Song of Sol. 2: 15-17)
August 23.	T.	The Turtle-dove (Psalm 74: 12-20)
August 24.	F.	Learn Parable of Fig-tree (Matt. 24: 32-35)
August 25.	S.	Green Plants of the Valley (Song of Sol. 6: 11-13)
August 26.	S.	The Mountain of the Lord's House (Isa. 2: 1-4)

TIME.—About 1000 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Solomon and his son.

## Golden Text Explained

1. Acknowledge God. (a) Theoretical versus practical. Many people acknowledge the existence and many of the attributes of God, but they refuse to trust and obey him. Felix virtually acknowledged him when he trembled under the preaching of Paul on the subject of righteousness, self-control, and judgment to come (Acts 24: 25), but he refused to make the full surrender which our text requires. His acknowledgment was one of theory, not of practice. Ananias and Sapphira acknowledged God in theory by being members of the church, but in practice they denied him when they lied about the price of their property. (Acts 5: 1ff.) People who belong to the

church, but who engage in worldliness in preference to serving and worshiping God, acknowledge him theoretically but deny him practically, (b) Continual versus occasional. Our text demands a continual acknowledgment rather than the occasional. One who prays only in time of sickness or in the path of an approaching storm does not do what our text demands. One who gets interested during a big meeting, but soon cools off and is indifferent and lukewarm is not obeying the command of our text.

2. In all thy ways. The word acknowledge means to know or recognize; to admit the claims of authority of one. So to acknowledge

God in all our ways means to recognize him as having authority over us and living in harmony with his commandments, (a) In the spiritual realm. The religious world acknowledges God in theory in this realm, but not in practice as long as it does what it pleases regardless of the fact it has no authority for many things it does. Those who sprinkle instead of baptizing, those who play instruments in their worship and burn incense are not acknowledging God as exercising authority over them, (b) In the social realm. We are social beings; we cannot live apart from society; we cannot obey God and withdraw from all social activities. But we cannot be a law unto ourselves in the social realm. The Lord proposes to direct our steps here as well as in the religious realm. To acknowledge God here means to conduct ourselves in harmony with the principles of Christianity. In this realm we find our recreation and entertainment and we must engage in such types as will not bring reproach upon the worthy name we wear, the name of Christ, (c) In the business realm. Most of us are forced to operate in this realm, and again we cannot allow our own wishes or the standards of the world to determine our actions. We must recognize the authority of God over us in all transactions and

refrain from every practice which Jesus would not approve, (d) In the realm of the home. All of us have home relationships. The Lord seeks to direct us in all these various relationships, as fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, etc. We must recognize God's authority over us and conduct ourselves in keeping with the teaching of the new covenant. The word *all* is worthy of notice in this text. We cannot be pleasing to God by acknowledging him in some of his ways and doing as we please in others: we must be completely surrendered: acknowledge him without reservations.

3. He will direct our steps. (a) Into all that is good for us. We may not see why we should be led into situations and experiences, but if we love God, we can rest assured that all will be for our good. (Rom. 8: 28.) (b) To his honor and glory. Some of the experiences through which we pass and wonder why may be for the honor of God. Job could not see why he was suffering, but God was honored, (c) To the happiness of our fellows. God can use us for the welfare of others and will do so if we will acknowledge him in all our ways. One cannot walk in the ways of the Lord without making others happy.

## Introduction

The word proverb is defined as "a profound maxim; in Scripture use, a parable. . . . A brief epigrammatic saying that is a popular byword." (Webster.) The Hebrew word translated proverb means "to be like, and therefore has primarily the meaning of comparison, similitude, and is applied to many discourses, sentences, and expressions which we would not class under the head of proverbs." (Pulpit Commentary.) From the same source we learn there are five kinds of proverbs. (1) Historical, none of which are in this book. (2) Metaphorical, such as enunciate some moral truth under a figure drawn from nature or life. (1: 17; 6: 6; 17: 12; 19: 13.) (3) Enigmas, which are riddles or obscure questions, the kernels of which convey a moral truth. (30: 4; 30: 15.) (4) Parabolic proverbs, which present things and truth in allegorical shape. (9:-

1.) (5) Didactical proverbs, which give precise instruction on points of morals, religion, or behaviour, such as is found all through the first nine chapters.

The book abounds in good moral instruction and counsel, and from Pulpit Commentary we take the following heads: 1. Duty to God: fear, 1: 7; trust in God and distrust in self, 3: 5; externals of worship important, 14: 9; 20: 25; God looks chiefly on the heart, 17: 3; confession of sins, 28: 13; accept chastisement, 3: 11.

2. Duty to ourselves: avoid fleshly lusts and evil companions, 1: 10; 13: 20; Sins to be avoided are: pride, 16: 5, 18, 19; avarice and cupidity, 28: 20; envy, 14: 30; luxury and intemperance, 2: 18; 13: 1; anger which leads to folly, 14: 17; 15: 1; 20: 3; idleness, 13: 4; 6: 6; self-praise, 12: 9; 27: 2.

3. Duty to our neighbors: sympathy and cheer, 12: 25; 16: 24; help the poor, 3: 27; 14: 31; judge honestly and truthfully, 17: 15; 24: 23; live in peace, 3: 29; 17: 13; avoid slander, 10: 10; 11: 12; hide his faults if possible, 10: 12; 19: 11; encourage sincere friendship, 18: 24; be honest in all transactions, 11: 1; 20: 14; 22: 28.

4. Domestic duties: parents teach their children, 20: 7; 1: 8; 4: 1;

train them up in the right way, 22: 6; correct them when they do wrong, 23: 13. Children should attend to instruction of elders, 10: 1; 23: 15. Mothers should be the crown of their husbands, 12: 4; and build up their houses, 14: 1; follow the example of the virtuous women, 31; 10ff.; avoid contentiousness, 19: 13; 25: 24. Servants should be carefully selected, 17: 2, wisely treated, 19: 10; 29: 21.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Obedience Brings Long Life (Prov. 3: 1, 2)

*My son, forget not my law.* There is doubt in the mind of some whether this is actually addressed by Solomon to Rehoboam, his son. Since teachers often addressed their students as their sons, it is possible that this is addressed to all young men. Of course, the admonition here given is applicable to all young men. Forgetting the law is not so much a failure to remember what is taught in the law as it is disregarding and refusing to do what is taught therein. So the wise man is cautioning all young people not to disregard or refuse to comply with the teaching of the law of the Lord. Young men especially are inclined to think they do not need Jesus Christ and the influence of the church in their lives, but they will never need the help of the Lord more than they do during the time they are forming their character. Obedience to the commandments of the Lord will enable them to build a character which will be acceptable to God and enable them to stand the storms of life and the trials of judgment.

*Let thy heart keep my commandments.* This demands more than mere outward intellectual conformity to the forms of religion. In the language of Paul this means to obey from the heart. (Rom. 6: 17.) This requires not only the intellect, but the emotions and will power of man be brought into play in our obedience to God. This should strike with withering force some today who observe the form by going to one service on Sunday to take the Lord's supper and give their dollar, but who will be so consumed by and entangled in the affairs of the world the rest of the week they do not have

time or interest enough to read their Bible or pray to God, much less to visit the sick and try to bring the lost to Christ.

*Length of days, and years of life.* At first glance the two expressions may seem to convey the same thought, but the first refers to the length of life while the latter refers to the fullness of life. Obedience to God and parents does not guarantee long life, but it does contribute to it. This promise was given with the fifth of the ten commandments (Ex. 20: 12), and is repeated in the New Testament (Eph. 6: 1-3). "The years of life will be many, but they will be years of life in the truest sense, as one of true happiness and enjoyment, free from distracting cares, sickness, and other drawbacks." Peace of mind is a part of this blessing of the fullness of life, for the obedient.

#### II Kindness and Truth Bring Blessings (Prov. 3: 3, 4)

*Let not kindness and truth forsake thee.* Kindness is love and goodness in action. Some synonyms for kindness are benignity, tenderness, compassion, clemency, gentleness, goodness, generosity, and favor. The good Samaritan showed kindness to the man who was injured and left by the side of the road. We have opportunities every day to be kind to people, but our trouble is that we let kindness forsake us because we are too busy with the affairs of this life, our selfish interests to be kind to others. "Truth is that absolute integrity of character, both in word and deed, which secures the unhesitating confidence of all." It excludes all hypocrisy and dissimulation. One may be untruthful and yet never utter a word. When we create

a false impression on others by gesture or inflection of voice or by deliberate action, we are practicing falsehood.

*Bind them about thy neck.* This may mean that these virtues will adorn the person who wears them, or it may be that the writer intends to impress us with the value of these things by telling us to keep them tied to our person. There are few things which better adorn the character than kindness and truth; and there are few things worth more in securing the approval of God and man.

*Write them upon the tablet of thy heart.* This changes the figure to impress us with the necessity of allowing them to be the motivating principles of our life. Our actions are to be dictated by the demands of kindness and our words are to be determined by the demands of truth. These virtues of kindness and truth are not to be practiced only when they are expedient, but at all times and in all circumstances regardless of the cost.

*So shalt thou find favor and good understanding.* This is the reward for practicing kindness and truth. Favor means the same thing as grace; understanding is here in the sense of sagacity, or prudence. And this favor and understanding will be both in the sight of God and man. Usually the world gives us about what we deserve. But the world will respond more heartily and generously to the virtues of kindness and truth than to any others we might manifest. God will be impartial in his view of our virtues and in the rewards which he gives. So if we but cultivate the virtues of kindness and truth, we will be blessed of God as is best for us, and we can be sure to enjoy as much of the favor of the world as we could gain in any other way.

### III. Trust in Jehovah Is Rewarded

(Prov. 3: 5, 6)

*Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart.* To trust means to put confidence in one; to rely confidently upon one; to set one's hope and confidence upon one. And to trust with all the heart means that we shall have no reservations; put complete confidence in one, and rely wholly on one. The basis for such trust as

this in Jehovah is found (1) in the fact that there is no record of any man ever regretting that he put his confidence in him; God has always merited the confidence of men and so rewarded them that they have been glad they trusted him. (2) Men who have trusted God most are the men who write these commandments; surely they would not tell us to do something if they had learned by experience that it does not pay. (3) In our limited experience we have learned that putting our trust in Jehovah is worth while; our limited experience agrees with the experience of the human race over several thousand years of time.

*Lean not upon thine own understanding.* To lean upon one's understanding is the opposite of putting our trust in Jehovah. We are told that one who trusts in his own heart is a fool. (Prov. 28: 26.) And he that trusteth in his riches shall fall. (Prov. 11: 28.) This does not mean that we are not to use our best judgment, for in many ways we are constantly called upon to make decisions according to our best judgment, always praying God to guide us to do his will. But this counsels us not to disregard Jehovah and depend wholly upon our own judgment unguided by that wisdom which is from God to all his children who ask for it.

*In all thy ways acknowledge him.* In all the affairs of life we are to recognize Jehovah as the one who determines our lot, and all we say and do must be in harmony with his will. All plans we make for the future are to be made subject to his will. (James 4: 13-17.) And the promise to us is that Jehovah will direct our paths. If we but trust in him instead of putting our trust in ourselves or in other men, Jehovah will direct our paths into the ways of peace, pleasure, and profit so long as these things are for our good. And if he directs our paths into the ways of sorrow and suffering, we may be sure that, like Job, we need these things to make the kind of servants he needs, and that they will work together for our good if we but continue to love and trust him. (Rom. 8: 28.)

### IV. Humility Will Be Rewarded

(Prov. 3: 7, 8)

*Be not wise in thine own eyes.*

Jehovah hates pride and arrogance. (Prov. 8: 13.) "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." (Prov. 16: 18.) "A man's pride shall bring him low; but he that is of a lowly spirit shall obtain honor." (Prov. 29: 23.) "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" (Isa. 5: 21.) And Paul says, "Be not wise in your own conceits." (Rom. 12: 16b.) He also tells us not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought. (Rom. 12: 3.) Pride and self honor and glory not only cost us the approval of Jehovah, but they will soon cause us to lose the respect and confidence of our fellow men.

*Fear Jehovah, and depart from evil.* The thought is that the fear of Jehovah leads one to depart from evil. Self-trust leads one into evil because of his lack of wisdom and ability to cope with the trials and temptations he meets in everyday life. It is not in man to direct his steps (Jer. 10: 23), so the one who relies on his own wisdom and strength is headed for destruction. But the one who fears Jehovah is wise (Prov. 9: 10), for this fear leads him to depart from evil and engage in the things which please God and lead to life everlasting. We are told that the fear of Jehovah is to hate evil. (Prov. 8: 13.) And by the fear of Jehovah men depart from evil. (Prov. 16: 6b.) It was Job's fear of Jehovah that helped him to turn away from evil. (Job 1: 1.)

*It will be health to thy navel.* The navel is that part of the body which was at one time regarded as the center of strength, and if it was in poor condition, the whole body suffered. So the one who puts his trust in Jehovah instead of himself, who fears Jehovah so that he departs from evil, will have that which is essential to his good health spiritually. Adam Clarke thinks this refers to man in his pre-birth state and teaches that as the unborn child receives its food through the umbilical cord, so the spiritual man is nourished through the fear of God and other qualities mentioned in this context. The writer changes the figure and says that the fear of Jehovah, humility, and other things mentioned are to the spiritual man what marrow is to the bones. Marrow is essential to the life and proper functioning

of the bones. So the fear of Jehovah, humility, and other things are necessary to the life and service of the spiritual man. Without marrow the bones decay, or become dry and brittle, unable to function properly. So the man who has not these qualities will become useless in the service of the Lord.

## V. Proper Use of Wealth Is Blessed

### (Prov. 3: 9, 10)

*Honor Jehovah with thy substance.* Under the old covenant this included the tithes and free-will offerings such as the people were making when Jesus commended the poor widow. (Mark 12: 41-44.) Under the new covenant it includes contributions to the relief of the poor, the preaching of the gospel, and every other worthy effort which the church or individuals have an opportunity to undertake. "There is that scattereth, and increaseth yet more; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth only to want. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." (Prov. 11: 24, 25.) "There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing; there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great wealth." (Prov. 13: 7.)

*So shall thy barns be filled with plenty.* Solomon promised rewards to the liberal soul with the emphasis on the material side. Jesus promised great rewards for liberality, even to one hundredfold, but the emphasis was not so much on the material side as on the spiritual. The rich young ruler was told to sell what he had, give to the poor, and follow Jesus, and he would have treasures in heaven. (Matt. 19: 16-22.) No one ever made greater sacrifices than Paul, and possibly no one ever put a greater per cent of his income into the work of the Lord than did he when he labored with his hands to support himself and his associates, yet he did not have full barns and overflowing vats of a material kind. However, at the close of life he was sure there was a crown of righteousness laid up for him and all others who loved and honored the Lord.

## VI. Chastening Is Not to Be Despised

### (Prov. 3: 11,12)

*My son, despise not the chastening of Jehovah.* The writer of Hebrews

quotes this in connection with the sufferings of the Jews who were about to give up Christ on account of persecution. So the hardships and trials occasioned by persecution are to be regarded as the chastening of the Lord. But we must think this is the only form of chastening. The Lord can use many types of experiences for our chastening. Nor are we to conclude that a person has sinned just because he is chastened of the Lord. Suffering is not necessarily proof of sin, as we learn from the experiences of Job. We are chastened in order that we may be partakers of God's holiness. (Heb. 12: 10.)

*Neither be weary of his reproof.* "Whoso loveth correction loveth knowledge; but he that hateth reproof is brutish." (Prov. 12: 1) "Reprove not a scoffer, lest he hate thee; reprove a wise man, and he will love thee." (Prov. 9: 8.) "A scoffer loveth not to be reprov'd; he will not go unto the wise." (Prov. 15: 12.) Some will become hardened by suffering and adversity and reach the point where they cease to believe in the goodness of God, while others will be melted into submission to his will by such experiences. If we regard the experiences of life as being determined by the Lord and view them as coming from the chastening hand of God in an effort to make out of us what we should be, we will be

drawn closer to him, be purified, encouraged, and strengthened. God works in us to will and do his good pleasure. (Phil. 2: 13.) The chastening of the Lord is God working in us and with us to make us into the likeness of his Son.

*Whom Jehovah loveth he reproveth.* Reproof and correction are signs of love. Many parents think otherwise today. They regard correction as an indication of a lack of love. Some think they love their children so much they cannot correct them, and they are allowing those children to grow up without learning what submission to authority is. When they get out on their own, they will have to learn the hard way what submission to police authority is. "The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself causeth shame to his mother." (Prov. 29: 15.) "Withhold not correction from the child; for if thou beat him with the rod, he will not die." (Prov. 23: 13, see also 14.) "He that spareth his rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." (Prov. 13: 24.) The chastening of Jehovah is said to be good for his children because the human father corrects the son whom he loves, and it results in good for the son. But today we have to prove that parents should chasten their children because God does such for his children.

### Lessons to Learn

1. "Temperance, chastity, honesty, and industry, which are inseparable from a life of piety, do in the course of things conduce to health, safety, and long life; and this is sufficient to warrant these general maxims of wisdom, without supposing them to be direct promises, which are invariably fulfilled." (M. Henry.)

2. Trusting in Jehovah rather than in one's own wisdom and strength is a mark of intelligence rather than ignorance; it insures a full and use-

ful life here rather than a worldly wasted life; and it gives promise of eternal peace and joy rather than eternal banishment from the presence of God.

3. Liberal giving of our material wealth honors Jehovah because it makes possible the preaching of the gospel to save souls, it relieves the sorrow and suffering of those in need, and promotes many good works which tend to honor and glorify God.

### Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

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

#### Golden Text Explained

What is the difference between theoretical and practical acknowledgment of God?

By use of Bible stories illustrate theoretical acknowledgment.

Illustrate occasional and continual acknowledgment of God.

Name and discuss four realms in which we should acknowledge Jehovah.

Into what will God direct our steps if we acknowledge him?

**Introduction**

- What is a proverb?
- Name and discuss the different kinds of proverbs.
- Name some duties to God taught in this book.
- What duties do we have to ourselves and to our neighbors?
- What domestic duties are taught in this book?

**Obedience Brings Long Life**

- What is meant by forgetting the law?
- What is suggested by letting the heart keep the commandments?
- What is promised those who forget not his law?
- What is meant by years of life?

**Kindness and Truth Bring Blessings**

- Can you define kindness and truth? Illustrate.
- What is meant by binding these about our neck?
- What is meant by writing them on the heart?
- What blessing is promised those who obey this commandment?

**Trust in Jehovah Is Rewarded**

- Can you clearly define trust?
- Does it differ from belief?
- In what is the basis for such trust found?
- What is said of those who put their trust in themselves or their riches?
- What blessing is promised to those who obey this commandment?

**Humility Will Be Rewarded**

- What is God's attitude toward pride and arrogance?
- Can you quote scripture in both Testaments on this point?
- What is the connection between fearing Jehovah and departing from evil?
- What is meant by fear being health to the navel and marrow to the bones?

**Proper Use of Wealth Is Blessed**

- What is meant by honoring Jehovah with our substance?
- What does Solomon say about the liberal soul and the one who makes himself poor?
- What blessing is promised the liberal giver?
- Compare the blessings promised in the Old Testament with those promised in the New.

**Chastening Is Not to Be Despised**

- What is the meaning of chastening?
- In what ways does the Lord chasten?
- Whose experience proves that chastening is not always punishment for sin?
- What is said of one who hates reproof?
- What different effects may chastening have on people?
- What was Solomon's attitude toward the correction of a child?
- Is his philosophy wise or unwise in this generation?
- What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

**Lesson X—September 2, 1956**

**THE VANITY OF WORLDLY PLEASURES**

**Lesson Text**

Eccles. 2: 1-11

1 I said in my heart, Come now, I will prove thee with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also was vanity.

2 I said of laughter, It is mad; and of mirth, What doeth it?

3 I searched in my heart how to cheer my flesh with wine, my heart yet guiding me with wisdom, and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what it was good for the sons of men that they should do under heaven all the days of their life.

4 I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards;

5 I made me gardens and parks, and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruit;

6 I made me pools of water, to water therefrom the forest where trees were reared;

7 I bought men-servants and maid-servants, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions

of herds and flocks, above all that were before me in Je-ru'-sa-lem;

8 I gathered me also silver and gold, and the treasure of kings and of the provinces; I gat me men-singers and women-singers, and the delights of the sons of men, musical instruments, and that of all sorts.

9 So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Je-ru'-sa-lem: also my wisdom remained with me.

10 And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them: I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced because of all my labor; and this was my portion from all my labor.

11 Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do; and, behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was no profit under the sun.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness." (Eccles. 2: 13.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Eccles. 2: 12-23.

### Daily Bible Readings

August	27.	M	.....	Alone as a Sparrow (Psalm 102: 1-7)
August	28.	T	.....	Jehovah Abides (Psalm 102: 12-22)
August	29.	W	.....	We Are the Lord's (Psalm 100: 1-5)
August	30.	T	.....	Jehovah Directs Our Way (Prov. 3: 1-12)
August	31.	F	.....	Seek the Lord and Find Him (1 Chron. 28: 1-9)
September	1.	S	.....	Rejoice in the Lord (Phil. 4: 1-7)
September	2.	S	.....	See Him Not, Yet Believe (1 Pet. 1: 3-9)

TIME.—About 977 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Solomon and his readers.

### Golden Text Explained

1. Apparent equality of the wise and foolish. (1) The fortunes of life are much the same in many respects. The writer says he had noticed that one event happened to both alike. Death and the things that lead thereto come to both. Sorrow, sickness, troubles, trials—all are endured by both the wise and the foolish, and they never end for either until that one event comes which ends all for both. (2) Both are forgotten soon after death. With few exceptions the wise and good are forgotten by the masses as soon as the foolish man is forgotten. "For of the wise man, even as of the fool, there is no remembrance for ever; seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten." (Eccles. 2: 16.) Outside of a man's family and his closest friends his name is soon forgotten, and even his family and friends soon adjust themselves to his absence and all move along with a rare mention of his name or accomplishments. (3) Alike in death. From the purely physical point of view their death is alike. "And how doth the wise man die even as the fool." (Eccles. 2: 16b.) Though the wise man accumulates much, he goes out with no more than the foolish man. The wise man may have made many friends, but he takes no more of them with him than does the foolish man.

2. Wisdom excelleth folly. All the similarity suggested above is only apparent; the similarities pointed out do not tell all the story. If man were no more than mere animal, the wise would have no advantage over the foolish. If there were no God and no hereafter, the foolish man would be as well situated as the wise, there would be no point to putting forth effort to gain wisdom. (1) As light

excels darkness. Light is used many times to represent truth and righteousness, while darkness is used to represent error and wickedness. The kingdom of Jesus Christ is a kingdom of light, but the kingdom of Satan is one of darkness. So as Jesus Christ excels Satan, light is better than darkness and wisdom is better than folly. "But the path of the righteous is as the dawning light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble." (Prov. 4: 18, 19.) (2) Sources indicate value. Wisdom is from above, from God. We are told that Jehovah giveth wisdom. (Prov. 2: 6.) If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men liberally. (James 1: 5.) Folly is of the earth, it is a product of man while refusing to walk in the light of God's truth, it has its origin in a fool. (Eccles. 10: 12-15.) Folly originates in this world (1 Cor. 3: 19), but wisdom originates in heaven. So as the heaven is higher than the earth, wisdom is better than folly. (3) The end to which they lead indicates their value. Folly leads to destruction (Prov. 18: 7), but wisdom leads to life everlasting. Foolishness will keep one from accomplishing the greatest possible good here on earth because it tends to cause one to use in the service of Satan the mental and physical powers with which he should serve God. And for this base use of God-given powers there is no satisfying rewards in this life, but in the life to come there is eternal shame and misery.

3. How to possess wisdom. (1) We are told that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. (Prov. 9: 10.) So we should cultivate the fear, reverence, of God. (2) And we

learn that wisdom comes in answer to prayer. (James 1: 5.) Hence we should spend a lot of time praying for wisdom to direct us in the affairs of life. (3) Jesus taught that obedience to his commandments is the course of

wisdom. (Matt. 7: 24-27.) So we should be careful to learn his will and determine by the grace of God to live every day in harmony with his will so far as our knowledge and ability will permit.

### Introduction

The authorship of Ecclesiastes is interesting matter for study. All ancient scholars accepted Solomon as the author of the book. Until the time of the Reformation no one, either Jew or Gentile, ever thought of suggesting anybody other than Solomon as its author. According to Pulpit Commentary, Martin Luther was the first one to deny that Solomon wrote the book; he took the position that a man named Sirach in the time of the Maccabees wrote it. Then others followed, suggesting other men and other dates. Those who deny that Solomon wrote the book charge that the arbitrary exercise of power, corruption among rulers, perversion of justice, promotion of base and unworthy men to power mentioned in the book could not have been written by Solomon. Again, they claim that there are words and grammatical constructions in the book which were not in use in Solomon's time, and this is freely admitted by conservative and reliable scholars. While many respectable names are on the list who deny that Solomon wrote the book, we prefer to accept the ancient view, especially since it is founded on statements in the inspired text. (Eccles. 1: 1, 12.) But to account for the difficulties in language we quote from two reliable scholars. "On the other hand, if we adopt the traditionary view that Solomon was the author, we avoid

all these doubtful expedients and pious frauds. . . . The peculiarities of diction may be explained (as in the book of Job) by supposing that the work was written by Solomon during a season of penitence at the close of his life, and edited in the present form, at a later period, perhaps by Ezra." (McClintock and Strong.) "That Solomon, son of David, might have been the *author* of the whole *matter* of this, and a *subsequent writer* put it in his own language, is a possible case; and were this to be allowed, it would solve all difficulties. Let us place the supposition thus: Solomon said all these things, and they are highly worthy of his wisdom; and a Divine writer, *after his time*, who does not mention his name, give us a faithful version of the whole in his own language." (Adam Clarke.) Though the writer does not use his name, he speaks of himself as son of David and king in Jerusalem. This identifies him almost as certainly as Isaiah and Jeremiah identify themselves as the writers of their books, or as Paul identifies himself in his books. We may as well deny that these men wrote the books which bear their names as to deny that Solomon wrote this book. And as these scholars quoted above say, the work of a later editor may well account for words and grammatical constructions of a later date.

### Exposition of the Text

I. An Experiment in Mirth (Eccles. 2: 1-3)

*I will prove thee with mirth.* This is what the writer said to his heart. As the rich fool addressed his soul (Luke 12: 19), this writer speaks to his heart. Since the heart is the seat of affections, the center of joy and happiness, such a statement would naturally be addressed to the heart. The word prove means "to try or to ascertain by an experiment." (Webster.) So the writer says he conducted an experiment in mirth to see

what is good for men to do all the days of their life; he would see if the *summum bonum* of life could be attained through mirth.

*Therefore enjoy pleasure.* Innocent mirth and pleasure as a diversion from the serious affairs of life are good and wholesome, but to give one's self wholly over to such with the intention of making such the primary thing in life is like trying to turn the whole cake into flavoring because the flavoring makes the cake taste good. As a flavoring to life

innocent pleasure is good, but to make selfish pleasure the whole of life is a mistake.

*I searched in my heart how to cheer my flesh with wine.* Having failed in the realm of intellectual pleasures to find anything worth a life of devotion, the writer now turns to the indulgence of his appetite. He turned to wine to see if it could give him the pleasure he sought, or if it could enliven him to the point where he could find satisfaction of other forms of pleasure.

*My heart yet guiding me with wisdom.* He seems to have given himself to an unlimited degree to mirth and pleasure, but to wine he does not abandon himself; he keeps the restraints of wisdom in his test of wine. This should suggest to all today that even Solomon would not give himself over wholly to wine when making an experiment to see what is good for man, and that one is foolish indeed today who will indulge freely in its use. Next, since Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, made the experiment and tells us he found it to be unable to give true happiness, we ought to be wise enough to take his word for it and leave strong drink alone.

*How to lay hold on folly.* Solomon's problem was how to use folly in such way as to derive lasting benefit therefrom. Surely if such could be done, Solomon, with all his wisdom, could have done it. But if the wisest man on earth could not so "lay hold on folly" as to get good therefrom, we will certainly fail if we try to do so.

*Till I might see what it was good for the sons of men.* Here Solomon states the purpose of his experiment. He wished to learn what was worth while in life. With his wisdom and his wealth, he would not be hindered in his search. His was a peaceful reign, so the duties of his office and anxieties for the welfare of the nation would not take his time and strength so that he could not conduct a thorough experiment. Men and women, boys and girls could be saved a lot of grief and shame if they would take the findings of Solomon as true and final. But most of us have to go over the ground for ourselves and learn the lesson from our own experiences. We are like the baby who will not be satisfied until he puts his hand on the pretty red spot on a

stove in spite of the warnings of his mother who has told him it will hurt. The word *hurt* does not mean much to the baby until he has learned from experience; so we find it difficult to take Solomon's word that worldly pleasures will hurt us until we learn it the hard way.

## II. An Experiment in Business Activities (Eccles. 2:4-8)

*I made me great works.* Among these would be the temple, said to be the most expensive building in the world. And his own house which required thirteen years to build was among the works in which he sought satisfaction and pleasure. He built temples for the gods of his foreign wives; he built store-cities and fortresses, summer homes in the mountains; he reconstructed cities which had been ruined by war. His reign was one of peace so that he was free to give himself to building within his territory, and he seems to have taken advantage of every opportunity. If any one ever had an opportunity to see if genuine happiness could be had through great business activities, it seems that he did.

*I planted me vineyards.* He turned from the building trades to that of gardens and parks. The word here for gardens is our word for paradise, so we conclude that he went for beauty as well as for utility in his vineyards. The names of the men who were overseers of these vineyards, gardens, and parks may be found in 1 Chron. 27: 25-31. It should be noticed that none of these activities is sinful in itself; they are legitimate works. Neither did he get them by fraud nor operate them according to unholy principles. But he was trying to derive from this work and the things he made for himself that which can be had only from God. Such things may be used lawfully as a legitimate means to an end, but they are not a worthy end in themselves; they cannot bring genuine happiness nor prepare one for life hereafter. If men engage in such activities as a means of giving honor and glory to God, they are good and worthwhile means to that end; but if they engage in these works with the thought that they will bring them peace and happiness and security here and a reward hereafter, they will be disappointed. Solomon's ex-

perience was recorded to teach us this very lesson.

*I made me pools of water.* Three pools in the vicinity of Bethlehem have been attributed to Solomon. They were 300, 400, and 500 hundred feet long and about 200 feet wide, and twenty to thirty feet deep. An earthen aqueduct brought water into Jerusalem and into the temple area.

*I bought men-servants and maid-servants.* This is a luxury for which many people long; they think, if they could only have servants to do all the hard work, they would be perfectly happy. But happiness does not consist of doing nothing but watch others do the work. Happiness and work go together better than happiness and idleness. If Solomon could not find complete peace and happiness with his many servants to do his every wish, we need not expect to find satisfaction in the few servants we can hope to employ.

*I had great possessions of herds and flocks.* Here is another dream of many people exploded. Many think they could be perfectly safe and secure and happy if they only had a stock ranch well stocked with fine herds of cattle. Solomon had all the money needed to build, stock and maintain a fine ranch, yet he did not find that complete satisfaction people think it will give them. If all this is used as a means to honor and glorify God, it can bring happiness; but if this is relied upon to furnish peace and security as an end in itself, the man who has it will be disappointed. Man was made for the purpose of glorifying God, and anything he has which helps him to do that is good for him, but when his possessions turn him from his primary purpose and become the end for which he strives, they are not good for him.

*I gathered me also silver and gold.* Solomon says he gathered silver and gold and treasures from the kings and provinces. The queen of Sheba gave him one hundred and twenty talents of gold. (1 Kings 10: 10.) According to Webster, a talent of gold in Solomon's time was equal to \$32,640.00 in our money. Solomon's navy, which he built and operated, brought him four hundred and twenty talents of gold from Ophir. (1 Kings 9: 26-28.) It is said that Solomon made silver to be in Jeru-

salem as stones, and as cedars in Lebanon for abundance. (1 Kings 10: 27-29.) Yet in spite of all this abundance of wealth Solomon did not find in it what he wanted and what many people today think they can find in it. People are guilty of a type of unbelief if they learn of Solomon's experience and then continue to strive to find happiness and satisfaction in these things where Solomon failed to find them. Since he has tried these things and tells us they are all vanity so far as attaining to happiness, we are guilty of unbelief if we disregard his teaching and try to do the thing he says cannot be done. Let us realize that people can be guilty of unbelief without denying the existence of God or the divinity of Jesus Christ.

*I gat me men-singers and women-singers.* Turning now to the realm of fine arts, we find Solomon trying to find happiness, the supreme good, in the world of music. Music as a science is good for education, entertainment, and recreation. Vocal music is good not only for our own pleasure, but as a means of honor and glorifying God through Christ. But here again we must realize that it is not the source of security and happiness; it cannot take the place of God in our life. Many people spend years of life learning music with no thought of using it as a means of honoring God; to them it is an end in itself. Solomon's experience says all such are doomed to disappointment.

### III. Solomon Evaluates his Experiences (Eccles. 2: 9-11)

*So I was great.* Some have used this verse to prove that Solomon did not write the book, saying that he would never have made such a statement about himself. But there is nothing boastful about this statement; it is a simple statement of fact. He did more building than any one before him; he had more wealth than any before him; and he had more wisdom than any before him. There was no reason why he should not state in this book what is recorded of him in the historical books as being true.

*Also my wisdom remained with me.* This is the second time the writer has mentioned the fact that he had the use of the wisdom God

gave him. (See verse 3.) This wisdom enabled him to experiment in these different fields in such way as to use them to the very best advantage and yet not descend to the base and vulgar level of immorality. If one with such wisdom could not succeed in finding complete peace and happiness in these fields, we must conclude that we, with our limited amount of wisdom, would be unable to do as well as did he. We ought, therefore, to take his word for the truth about these matters and not waste time and energy as well as endanger our souls by trying to do what he says cannot be done.

*Whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them.* All that his eyes beheld and all for which his heart yearned were within his reach because of his position as king and his great wealth. He was not hindered in the possession of anything he thought might bring him the happiness for which he was looking. Much of it was foolish and hurtful, especially from a spiritual point of view. Some one has said that Solomon practiced a refined sensualness and voluptuousness. It is true that if he had not been able to hide behind the right to maintain a harem of one thousand women he might have descended to the base plain of immorality. And there is little difference between his legal operations in this field and the illicit operations of those whom we classify as immoral. The lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh proved his undoing. He loved too many women and went too far in satisfying their desires to establish their religion in Jerusalem, and finally actually took part with them in idolatrous worship. (1 Kings 11: 4-8.)

*I looked on all the works that my*

*hands had wrought.* Solomon's public works were a source of pride. His temple, palace, fortresses, and his navy were all outstanding accomplishments. Some have seen in these things the third sin of his life. In the above paragraph we noticed the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh; in this some have seen the pride, or vainglory, of life. John says these are all there is in the world. (1 John 2: 16, 17.) So Solomon tried to find happiness in every field in which people can sin. Many of the things he did were right and good if he had done them for the glory of God instead of making them his God. Other things he did were foolish and hurtful in themselves. But there seems to be nothing in the list of things he did that people are not doing today in the hope of finding what Solomon failed to find.

*All was vanity and a striving after wind.* This is Solomon's conclusion which he reached by experimentation. The things he did brought him momentary satisfaction, they satisfied the desires of his flesh for a time. But even the flesh, his animal nature, soon tired of these things and craved something new and different. The longings of his spirit went on in hunger and disappointment in spite of all that he had and did. The man who forgets he is a dual being and spends all his time and energy trying to satisfy the flesh will find that he is attempting the impossible, for fleshly desires can never be permanently sated; and he will learn some day that he has starved his spiritual nature by neglect. They are doing the opposite of what they should and what God demands of them—to feed 'the spiritual nature and destroy, crucify, the flesh with its passions and lusts. (Gal. 5: 24.)

### Lessons to Learn

1. Great endowments should be used for better things than satisfying every desire of the eye and the heart.

2. Solomon is a good example of one who started out with good intentions, but ended life in failure. Some one has said that the road to

hell is paved with good intentions never carried out.

3. Solomon perfectly illustrates the statement of Jesus that life does not consist in the abundance of things a man possesses. Life consists not in what a man has or does, but in what he is.

### Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

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

### Golden Text Explained

State and discuss apparent equalities of the wise and the foolish.

State and discuss three ways in which wisdom excels folly.  
 What is the connection between reverence and wisdom?  
 What is the relationship between prayer and wisdom?  
 How are wisdom and obedience to God related?

**Introduction**

Who was the first man to question Solomon's authorship of Ecclesiastes?  
 Name some things on which men base their contention that Solomon did not write the book.  
 How may we account for these peculiarities of diction?  
 On what may we base our belief that Solomon wrote the book?

**An experiment in Mirth**

What is meant by proving the heart with mirth?  
 Does Solomon intend to teach that all pleasures are wrong?  
 What does he teach?  
 What use did he make of wine?  
 What kept him from going to excess?  
 What use did Solomon propose to make of folly?  
 What use should we make of Solomon's findings in these experiments?  
**An Experiment in Business Activities**  
 What are some of the works of Solomon mentioned in our lesson?  
 What do you know of his vineyards and gardens?

Why was Solomon's use of these things wrong and hurtful?  
 What do you know of his water pools?  
 What proof do we have that happiness is not found in idleness?  
 What evidence can you give that happiness is not found in lands and catties?  
 What do you know of Solomon's wealth?  
 From what sources did it come?  
 Can you prove that wealth can, or cannot, bring happiness and peace?  
 How can wealthy people be happy?  
 What proof have we that happiness is not found in the field of fine arts?

**Solomon Evaluates his Experiments**

Did Solomon boast of his greatness?  
 What is said of his wisdom in connection with these experiments?  
 What is said of Solomon's opportunity to find happiness in the things he enjoyed?  
 What is said of his operations in the fields of lust of the eyes and lust of the flesh?  
 What do you know of his operation in the field of the vainglory of life?  
 What impossible task did Solomon undertake?  
 What is said of man's dual nature?  
 Which side of man's nature is to be satisfied?  
 What is to be done with the fleshly desires?  
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

**Lesson XI—September 9, 1956**

**THE CREATOR REMEMBERED**

**Lesson Text**

Eccles. 12: 1-7, 13, 14

1 Remember also thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;

2 Before the sun, and the light, and the moon, and the stars, are darkened, and the clouds return after the rain;

3 In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows shall be darkened,

4 And the doors shall be shut in the street; when the sound of the grinding is low, and one shall rise up at the voice of a bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low;

5 Yea, they shall be afraid of *that* which is high, and terrors shall be in

the way; and the almond-tree shall blossom, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail; because man goeth to his everlasting home, and the mourners go about the streets:

6 Before the silver cord is loosed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern,

7 And the dust returneth to the earth as it was, and the spirit returneth unto God who gave it.

13 *This is* the end of the matter; all hath been heard: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole *duty* of man.

14 For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*Remember also thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.*" (Eccles. 12: 1.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalms 119: 9-16.

### Daily Bible Readings

September 3.	M	Isaac's Love for Rebekah (Gen. 24: 1-67)
September 4.	T	Jacob's Love for Rachel (Gen. 29: 13-35)
September 5.	W	Shechem's Love for Dinah (Gen. 34: 1-12)
September 6.	T	Boaz' Love for Ruth (Ruth Ch. 2-4)
September 7.	F	Abraham's Love for Sarah (Gen. 23: 1-20)
September 8.	S	Elkanah's Love for Hannah (1 Sam. 1: 1-7)
September 9.	S	Abigail's Love for David (1 Sam. 25: 1-42)

TIME.—About 977 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Solomon and his readers.

### Golden Text Explained

1. Remember also thy Creator. The duty of remembering God is added to that which had just been said, "Let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." (11: 9.) This is an admonition to young people to enjoy life, but to do so in pure wholesome ways so that they may not be ashamed when they meet God in judgment. His advice is to enjoy life, but remember also thy Creator so that you may meet him in peace in the judgment. To remember our Creator means (1) to recognize him as God and be duly grateful to him for life. Since he is our Creator, he is the giver of life and all its attendant blessings; every good and perfect blessing is from him. (2) To give ourselves to him in lifelong service. If we could give every day of life and could live as long as Methuselah, we could not pay God for his blessings, so we should begin as early as possible and work as hard as possible to give him all the honor and glory possible (3) To live a life of purity. God is infinitely holy; unholy living dishonors him. We remember him when we refrain from evil in order to please him and honor his name.

2. In the days of thy youth, (a) In order to give one's whole life to God it must be given in youth. Youth is a very important stage of life, and if it is wasted, much of life can never be given to God. (b) Youth is the formative period of life, and habits are being formed which will stay with us throughout life. Ideals are being formed and goals are being set which will influence us to the end of life. One who forgets

God in this period will have much to undo, if he can, later in life, (c) Days will come when we will have no pleasure in these things. Youth is naturally inclined to be religious; it is the time for making the decision whether one will live for God or for the world and the devil. Some estimate that nine out of ten who profess to be Christians do so before they reach their middle twenties. Beyond that age people are so tied up with business and pleasure that they find no time, or they are so deeply involved and hopelessly entangled in sin that they do not quit, though they vainly hope that some day conditions will change.

3. Why in the days of our youth? (a) To guide us in the building of character. We begin in youth to build for all of time and eternity, and we need guidance. Only God can guide us in building character so that it will stand for eternity. Why build during youth contrary to the will of God when we know that we will have to tear down and build again when we decide to live for God? (b) Bad habits formed during youth may stay with us to plague us through life and destroy us in eternity. People have been known to form such habits as drunkenness, lusts, gambling, and others in youth expecting to quit them all and settle down to holy living and find that these habits had such hold on them that they could not quit them. Others have been able to quit all bad habits except one and die a slave to it and be lost eternally on account of it. (c) We reap what we sow. If one knew he could quit all bad habits formed during youth, it would still pay not to form them and engage in sin because of the necessity of reaping what we sow. Sin and suffering are inseparably

wedded so that one cannot indulge in sin without suffering the consequences if it. Forgiveness for the sin does not stop the suffering in this life. David was forgiven of his sin, but he suffered for it as long as he lived, (d) The devil does not de-

serve one day of service, why give him the best part of life? If we give him the first part of life, the latter part can never mean as much to God, never be worth as much, as it could if we had not given the first part to the devil.

### Introduction

Since this is written primarily for adults, most of whom are parents, it is in place to discuss their responsibility in leading their children to remember their Creator in the days of their youth. (1) A duty to God. Parents are entrusted with children to rear them for the Lord. Hannah is a fine example of one who realized that children are given to us by the Lord and that we must recognize his right to them; she gave her son back to God, and he served God all his life. Parents can make of their children what they want them to be if they are willing to give the time and effort necessary. If they do not make servants of God out of them, they will be held responsible to God for it. Some parents who keep themselves from evil and attend church regularly may be lost because they do not put enough time, thought, prayer, and work into the rearing of their children. (2) A duty to the children. Parents owe their children proper care and training. We have no right to bring children into the world and let them live for the devil and go to the devil when they die. If they were born fully capable of taking care of themselves in temptation, our responsibility would not be so great. But they are wholly dependent upon parents for a knowledge

of what is right and wrong, how to do the right and avoid the wrong. And most children are born with definite inclinations to do wrong and to enjoy it. Parents have the responsibility of directing their thoughts, words, and deeds. They must encourage them in the good and discourage them from the evil. If necessary to restrain them from evil, they must punish them. Eli sinned in that he did not restrain his sons from evil. (1 Sam. 3: 13b.) The modern doctrine of non-punishment of children is anti-scriptural and is a sin against children. (3) For their own satisfaction. If children are given the proper training, they are a joy and satisfaction to parents, especially in old age; but if they are allowed to grow up in disobedience and ungodliness, they are a disappointment and a continual source of anxiety and sorrow. (Prov. 10: 1; 15: 20; 29: 3.) Many parents neglect their children while they are young, never teaching them Bible stories, never furnishing them good reading material suited to their age and interests, and then wonder why they do not obey the gospel and make good church members. The more time and effort we put into the rearing of children, the bigger the dividends we reap in joy and satisfaction.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Remember God Before Old Age

(Eccles. 12: 1-5a)

*Before the evil days come.* This phrase seems to be used of our last illness and death, though some make no difference between this and the phrase that follows, applying both to old age. Youth is reminded that evil days are ahead and that those days afford no time or encouragement to prepare to meet God. That preparation can best be made in our youth while change and adaptation are relatively easy. It should be noticed here that the wise man does not intimate that there is time or

opportunity to remember God after death.

*I have no pleasure in them.* Not only should we remember our Creator before death, but we should do so before the time draws near when we have no pleasure in doing so. This refers to old age. It is not meant that no old people find pleasure in remembering God, but it is implied that one who rejects God during youth and middle life will find it hard to make such a radical change in old age and find pleasure in the things he has despised all his life. We become rather set in our habits of

thought, feeling, and action before we reach old age. One who cultivates the enjoyment of worldly pleasures and fleshly lusts will find it difficult to change and find enjoyment in heavenly activities and holy thoughts. Men become so involved in business ventures and women are so pressed with home duties that they think they have no time to consider making so radical a change in their way of life. They satisfy themselves by saying they will attend to such matters when they have a convenient time, which never comes to about nine out of ten who are in that situation. It is suggested in this text that youth finds pleasure in remembering God, but that old age preceded by a worldly life does not find pleasure in so doing. And the fact that so many young people turn to God, and so few old people find time or desire to do so is abundant proof of the truth of the statement.

*Before the sun, and the light, and the moon, and the stars, are darkened.* This verse seems to say in different figures what has just been said in the preceding verse. Spring-time is a time of light and warmth and beauty. The sun, moon, and stars shine brightly, and there is little to hinder their light. So in youth the light of life is bright, the springs of life are strong, and the joys of life are fervent.

*The clouds return after the rain.* This seems to be a description of winter when the lights of heaven are darkened and the days are dreary and the nights are dark and long. Youth, like spring, is full of life and vitality; opportunities beckon and visions encourage. But old age, like winter, is a time of decay and inactivity; there is no bright outlook to encourage us to change, and little strength and determination to assure us of success in the effort to make a radical change in our manner of life.

*In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble.* Here the writer begins a detailed description of old age. Some have thought the figure is that of a house, while others have thought he only likens the physical body to a house, and that these expressions are to be applied to various parts of the body as the house in which the spirit lives. We shall proceed on the latter assumption as that

seems to be more in line with the trend of thought and the various figures used. The keepers of this physical house in which we live are the arms and hands. In old age they become weak and are given to trembling.

*The strong men shall bow themselves.* The strong men are the lower limbs of the body. In old age the weakness of limbs shows in the inability to stand erect in both the hip and knee joints. Limbs which have carried heavy loads in youth and middle age bend and give away under much lighter loads in old age.

*The grinders cease because they are few.* The grinders are the teeth. They cease to function because they are few; a few here and there are incapable of grinding food, hence they cease to do their work. Modern dentistry has proved a blessing to old age.

*Those that look out of the windows shall be darkened.* This refers to the eyes which become dim in old age. Most people need glasses before they reach old age, and would be in much worse condition by the time they reach old age if it were not possible to get glasses to protect their eyes.

*And the doors shall be shut in the street.* This is not as clear as others, but seems to refer to the lips. David refers to the lips as the door to the mouth. (Psalm 141: 3.) The old commentators said the lips had to be kept closed when eating because the teeth were gone, but good manners now demand as much.

*The sound of the grinding is low.* This is true because there are few grinders, and because the teeth are few a type of food is used which requires little grinding.

*One shall rise up at the voice of a bird.* In old age people do not sleep as well as in youth; they rarely have that sound deep sleep so natural in youth. Even the noise of the song of birds is sufficient to awaken them.

*The daughters of music shall be brought low.* The daughters of music seem to be the organs of speech. They are weakened in volume and humbled in quality so that those who once enjoyed singing now find themselves unable to keep pace with the congregation or to keep their voice from breaking and losing the tune.

*They shall be afraid of that which is high.* From fear of losing their

balance they keep away from high points; weakness causes them to avoid long climbs, even stairs to a second story becomes a task and finally an impossibility.

*The almond-tree shall blossom.* This refers to hair turning gray and then white. The bloom of the almond-tree is said to be white.

*The grasshopper shall be a burden.* So completely spent is the strength of the old man that even so light a creature as the grasshopper would be a burden to carry.

*Desire shall fail.* Desire for food wanes; the passions are weakened; and in many the desire to live is gone. Many in advanced age and poor health see no further purpose in life and wonder why the Lord does not take them.

## II. Remember God before Death

(Eccles. 12: 5b-7)

*Man goeth to his everlasting home.* This suggests that this world is not our home; we are pilgrims here. (1 Pet. 2: 11.) Those who spend all their time and attention laying up treasures on this earth act like they think this is their everlasting home. When they have to leave here and go to the next world, they will have nothing laid up for their enjoyment there. We may also take courage from the fact that there is an everlasting home to which we may go and from which we will never be driven by sickness and death.

*The mourners go about the streets.* Clarke thinks "the long hollow groans and throat rattlings which proceed from" a man in the hours of death are the mourners going about in the streets. This is a bit too fanciful. Hired mourners gathered at homes where death was expected, hoping to be employed; friends and relatives gathering to be with the family at the departure of the aged would be weeping as they went about.

*Before the silver cord is loosed.* Clarke continues the figure of the human body and makes the cord the spinal marrow; the golden bowl the brain in the skull; the pitcher and the wheel parts of the heart. Others change the figure to a lamp hanging from the ceiling. The silver cord holds the lamp so as to enable it to give light. If the cord is loosed, the lamp falls and ceases to function.

*The golden bowl is broken.* To

some this means the bowl that held the oil. Others change the figure to that of a rope and bucket at the cistern. If the cord is broken, we can no longer draw the water of life; or if the bowl is broken, we can draw no more water.

*Or the pitcher broken at the fountain.* If the figure is that of drawing water from a well, the golden bowl is out of place, for it is not likely that people made a practice of using a golden bowl for a bucket. And why speak of a golden bowl and a pitcher at a fountain and a wheel at a cistern? This writer sees in these phrases varied figures, each referring to the dissolution of the body. The breaking of the silver cord is the breaking of that thread of life which holds body and soul together; it is simply a poetic expression of the separation of body and soul in death. The golden bowl is connected with light. (Zech. 4: 2.) If the bowl is broken, the oil that is necessary to give light is lost, and the light goes out. This is another poetic expression for expiration of life. The pitcher broken at the fountain makes impossible the carrying of water to the thirsty and perishing. If that which conveys the water of life to a man is broken, the life ceases, so another picture of death.

*The wheel broken at the cistern.* This figure need not be connected with the other preceding it. Like the others in this verse, it stands by itself as a figure of death. The wheel was that to which the surface end of the rope was tied and which gave leverage to the one who drew the water. If the wheel was broken, no more water could be drawn from the cistern. If the water of life ceases to be furnished the aged person, death follows, so another picture of death. If someone insists in tying all these phrases together into one picture, that of a well and bucket on a rope with a pitcher in which to carry the water is preferred to the explanation of Clarke mentioned above.

*The dust returneth to the earth as it was.* To this writer this is another of these varied ways of picturing death. Reference is made here to the creation story that man was originally made of dust, at least that part of man which is visible and tangible. It is a humbling thought that these

bodies which in youth are so beautiful, strong, and active will be reduced to corruption and dust; but it is a challenging and encouraging thought that God will not forget them, but will raise them in incorruption and immortality fitted to the house of the spirit in the eternal spiritual world where he lives.

*The spirit returneth unto God who gave it.* This should settle the argument as to the nature of man; he is composed of body and spirit. How can we deny this duality when there is something about us which goes back to dust, and still something else which goes back to God? This does not necessarily prove that the spirit goes directly to heaven, its final resting place; it goes to that part of Hades known as Paradise. When it goes to that place where God wishes to keep it until the resurrection, it may be said to return to God.

### III. Conclusion of the Whole Matter

(Eccles. 12: 13, 14)

*This is the end of the matter; all hath been heard.* Solomon had experimented with different things on which people are wont to rely for happiness and had found them all vanity and striving after wind. He had entertained different philosophies, but none of them proved to be reliable. However, there is one thing on which he can depend and can recommend to all who might hear him or read his writings.

*Fear God, and keep his commandments.* This way might be safe or that course in life might be permissible, but to fear God and keep his commandments is a way that is right and cannot possibly be wrong. None can be found who will say that it is unsafe to follow this course. Some may say it is not necessary, but none can be found who will say that fearing God and keeping his commandments will hurt a man here or ruin his chances for happiness hereafter. To fear God is to reverence his holy name and respect his authority. We do not fear him as we fear disease, storms, or wild animals; our love for God casts out or makes impossible such fear. (1 John 4: 18.) To keep his commandments in Solomon's day meant to obey the old covenant given through Moses, but today it means to obey the commandments of the

gospel given through Christ and recorded by apostles and prophets in the book we call the New Testament. Peter made a statement to Cornelius which throws light on this. He said the man who fears God and works righteousness is acceptable to God. (Acts 10: 35.) Where Solomon has "keep his commandments" Peter has "work righteousness." So we conclude that we work God's righteousness when we keep his commandments. The idea that anything God commands us to do is an act of human righteousness is next to blasphemy.

*This is the whole duty of man.* The fear of God is piety, the proper disposition; keeping his commandments is righteousness, the proper course of action. The first is a matter of the heart, and the latter is a matter of the life or practice. Both the inward and outward man is included in this statement of duty, so Solomon says this is the whole duty of man.

*For God will bring every work into judgment.* This is the reason why we should fear God and keep his commandments. The man who fears and obeys will have nothing to fear in judgment. Every work includes both good and evil. (Rom. 2: 4-9; 2 Cor. 5: 10.) But the man who fears God and keeps his commandments will not have to face the evil of his life because the blood of Christ will cover those mistakes so that they will not be remembered against him in judgment. (Heb. 8: 12.)

*With every hidden thing.* These are the sins of our life which we refuse to confess, which we try to hide from others. If confession is to be as public as the sin, there is little reason to refuse to confess our sins. Public sins are known already. If one is not willing to acknowledge his sin before those who know of the matter, he is too proud to be forgiven. Trying to hide sin is a dangerous thing. In trying to hide his sin, David committed other sins as grievous as the one he was trying to hide. But the most dangerous thing about trying to hide sins is that we may succeed. For if we succeed in hiding them, we will never confess them; if we never confess them, we never get forgiveness; if we are never forgiven, we will be lost.

### Lessons to Learn

1. Whether in youth or in old age, today is the day of salvation, the time to remember our Creator.

2. Youth is a natural time for giving oneself to God. Parents who fail to lead their children to do so commit a great sin against them and

God that may cost the eternal happiness of both parents and children.

3. Obedience has always been a condition of salvation. Heaven is promised to the obedient, not to the disobedient. Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him. (Heb. 5: 9.)

### Questions for the Class

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

#### Golden Text Explained

What type of enjoyment does Solomon recommend for youth?  
State and discuss three ways to remember our Creator.  
Why is youth the best time to remember God?  
State and discuss four reasons why we should remember God in youth.

#### Introduction

Why are parents obligated to God to lead their children to remember him?  
Why are parents so obligated to their children?  
How does such course lead to the satisfaction of parents?

#### Remember God Before Old Age

What is meant by the evil days?  
Is there an opportunity to remember God after death?  
Why is it difficult to turn to God in old age?  
How is the springtime, or youth, described?  
What is meant by the clouds returning after the rain?  
What are the keepers of the house?  
What are the strong men that bow themselves in old age?  
What is meant by the grinders?  
Those that look out the window?

What are the doors that are shut?  
What is the sound of the grinding?  
What is meant by one rising at the voice of a bird?  
What is meant by the daughters of music?  
What is the almond-tree?  
What is meant by the grasshopper being a burden?  
What is said of desire in old age?

#### Remember God Before Death

Since this world is not our home, how should we spend our time here?  
Who are the mourners going about the streets?  
What is meant by the silver cord? the golden bowl? the pitcher broken? and the wheel?  
What reference is made to the creation story?  
What is said of the spirit?  
What does this suggest with reference to the nature of man?

#### Conclusion of the Whole Matter

What was Solomon's conclusion to all his study and experiments?  
How does Peter express this same duty of man?  
Can you show this to be man's whole duty?  
What reason is given for following this course?  
What is said of hidden sins?  
What is our greatest danger with reference to hidden sins?  
What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

## Lesson XII—September 16, 1956

### A SONG OF SPRINGTIME

#### Lesson Text

Song of Sol. 2: 8-17

8 The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh, Leaping upon the mountains, Skipping upon the hills.

9 My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: Behold, he standeth behind our wall; He looketh in at the windows; He glanceth through the lattice.

10 My beloved spake, and said unto me. Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.

11 For, lo, the winter is past; The rain is over and gone;

12 The flowers appear on the earth; The time of the singing of birds is come, And the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our land;

13 The fig-tree ripeneth her green figs, And the vines are in blossom; They give forth their fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

14 O my dove, that art in the clefts

of the rock, In the covert of the steep place, Let me see thy countenance, Let me hear thy voice; For sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.

15 Take us the foxes, the little foxes, That spoil the vineyards; For our vineyards are in blossom.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"His banner over me was love" (Sol. 2: 4b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Song of Sol. 1: 1-17.

### Daily Bible Readings

September 10.	M	Hagar's Sorrow (Gen. 21: 17-20)
September 11.	T	No Sorrow in Heaven (Rev. 21: 1-4)
September 12.	W	David's Sorrow (2 Sam. 19: 1-8)
September 13.	T	Jacob's Grief (Gen. 37: 29-36)
September 14.	F	Sorrows of Jesus (Matt. 26: 37-44)
September 15.	S	Sorrow and Sighing Shall Flee Away (Isa. 35: 1-10)
September 16.	S	Sorrow of the Israelites (Ex. 3: 7-12)

TIME.—About 1014 B.C.

PLACE.—Unknown.

PERSONS.—Solomon and his bride.

### Golden Text Explained

1. The meaning and setting of the text. The bride in this love song is the speaker. She is calling to memory the experience she had when feasting with her lover, the king. In this house of banqueting she was under the banner of her lover. A banner is "a piece of cloth bearing the heraldic arms of a person. (Webster.) But the banner of this king was love. Proceeding on the basis that this is capable of a spiritual application, we have the picture of the Lord and his people; they live and feast under his banner of love.

2. He conquers us with the banner of love. Jesus set out to conquer the world, but he did not have an army. He made no treaties and formed no alliances with the powerful nations of the earth. He chose a few meek and humble men and sent them out into the world armed only with a message of love and suffering. The only hint of coercion about his plan is a promise of eternal salvation to all who accept and live in harmony with this message of love, and a threat of eternal punishment for all who reject the message and despise his offer of love and goodness. Under this banner of love he has conquered many millions who learned the lesson of love from him so that they would gladly give their lives in his service.

16 My beloved is mine, and I am his: He feedeth *his flock* among the lilies.

17 Until the day be cool, and the shadows flee away, Turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart Upon the mountains of Be'-ther.

3. He sustains and guides with the banner of love. As long as the bride in this love story was under the banner of her royal lover she felt perfectly safe. So as long as we are under the banner of the love of our King, we are safe from all harm. As the king gives protection to his subjects, so we enjoy the protection of the Lord because we are citizens of his kingdom. But he also guides and directs us in our worship and service which we give to him, and this guidance is given us in love. He is not a despot who rules over a kingdom of slaves with a mailed fist, making unreasonable demands of them and pouncing upon them at the slightest provocation to punish and destroy. But he deals with us in tender lovingkindness, with pity and compassion, in forbearance and long-suffering, forgiving our mistakes, healing our wounds and bruises, giving us courage and strength to try again with the assurance that there is no end to this love and mercy if we sincerely trust him and try to do right. Such love and goodness are bound to beget love within his people, a love that will make them willing to serve him regardless of the cost.

4. He rewards us under the banner of love. As the bride of this love song was rewarded with a royal feast, so our King rewards us far be-

yond that which we deserve for any service or worship we may be able to render to him. We feast in his spiritual presence here as we worship him on the Lord's day, and this is but a foretaste of the eternal feast we shall enjoy with him in heaven. Our call to this feast is in love. He was not under obligation to invite us. When in sin we were unfit to feast with him, but he graciously cleansed us from our filth and exalted us to the position of sons of God that we might be in position to attend this love feast. We had no

robes fit for the occasion, but he put on us the robe of his righteousness, clothed us with the wedding garment, and prepared us to feast with him in heavenly joy forever. And since accepting his call we have through weakness and ignorance proved ourselves unfit and unworthy to attend this feast; our garments have been soiled with sin, but his blood washes us and takes away the stains of sin, and we are again in condition to feast with him. If his banner over us were not love, none of us would ever be permitted to feast with him.

### Introduction

The book from which we take our text was written by Solomon, as its name suggests. There have been very few doubts expressed as to who wrote the book, but many have doubted the profitableness of the book especially for young people. Adam Clarke advised young preachers to avoid using texts from the book. Some of the scenes described in the book are rather erotic, and the language used is delicate for western ears in our generation.

There are three theories of interpretation of the book. 1. "Those which assume that the work is an *allegory*, that the facts contained in it are merely employed for the purpose of framework, the language being mystic and figurative. 2. Those which are founded upon a *naturalistic* basis, taking the literary features of the work as the first in importance, and regarding it as some form of *love-poem* or collection of erotic songs. 3. Between these two extremes stands the typical view, which, without discarding the historical and literary basis, not to be disputed on the very face of the work, endeavours to justify its position in the Word of God by analogy with other portions of scripture, in which national and natural facts and interests are imbued with spiritual significance." (Pulpit Commentary.)

The first of these theories of interpretation is definitely out of the picture; it is not an allegory. And those who have so used it have gone into such extremes and have been so divided as to its meaning that the serious student will refrain from allegorizing. The second theory of inter-

pretation, though held by some big names among scholars, is not satisfactory. Why would an erotic love song which teaches no spiritual lesson be included in the canon of inspired writings? On the basis of this theory we can hardly justify the appearance of this book in the Bible. We therefore believe that this love song, though based upon historical persons and events, was intended to teach lessons of a spiritual nature. "The main purpose of the book is not to glorify a human sentiment or relationship, which seems out of place in a Hebrew book, but rather, using the ideal human feelings and relationship to lead the soul of man into the thought of its fellowship to God, the condescending privilege which is included in that fellowship, the exaltation of man which it brings with it, and the mutual character of religion, both in the individual and the church, as based upon the mystical union of God and his creature and their interchange of communications."

This love song was written during the first part of the reign of Solomon, because, (1) it is a lively song throbbing with the strength, vigor, passion, and imagination of a young man. Ecclesiastes is such a book as an old man would write, and this song bears the marks of a man in his prime. (2) When the song was written, Solomon had sixty wives and eighty concubines (Song of Sol. 6: 8), but when he was old, he had three hundred wives and seven hundred concubines (1 Kings 11: 3). This we believe to be decisive on that point.

## Exposition of the Text

### I. The Coming of the Beloved (Sol. 2: 8, 9)

*The voice of my beloved!* The bride of this story has adjured the daughters of Jerusalem by the roes and the hinds of the field, terms which could be used only in poetry, that they not disturb her royal lover, but leave him to sweet slumber until he pleases to arise. Obviously after a break in the song, she looks toward the hills and listens for his voice. She is thrilled to ecstasy by his voice. From the order of the statements we gather that she heard him before she could see him. This is not at all impossible in a mountainous country.

*Leaping upon the mountains.* The royal lover is pictured as leaping upon the mountains and skipping upon the hills. This suggests the joy in the heart of the lover as he goes for a season of communion with the object of his love. The hills and mountains are not in the way, they are not insuperable obstacles to love; the royal lover bounds over them as the roe or the hart with no thought of difficulty.

*Behold, he standeth behind our wall.* The swarthy bride in her mountain home in the vicinity of Shunem senses the presence of her royal mate behind the wall that encloses her house. He does not rush in, but looks through the windows and glances through the lattice.

Some lessons suggested: (1) The voice of our Lord is pleasant and thrilling. Those who take the poem to have some spiritual meaning are not slow to say that Solomon is used here as a type of Christ and that the bride may be the church or members thereof. To the Lord's people his voice should be pleasant and thrilling; they should listen eagerly to hear what he says and be thrilled with the privilege of obeying him. To manifest any other attitude is to betray a lack of love for him.

(2) As the royal lover is pictured as leaping upon the mountains and skipping upon the hills to reach and commune with his bride, so our Lord overcomes all obstacles that would prevent our communion with him. There is nothing too difficult for him. We were in sin, and in his holiness he could not commune with us. This difficulty was overcome by his com-

ing in our nature, dying for our sins, and removing them through the offering of his blood in the holy place not made with hands. We need not try to deal with details so far as to say this difficulty is a mountain and this one a hill, which is pressing the figure too far. But surely the poet intended to suggest the Lord's power to come to the side of his beloved in spite of what might stand between.

(3) The bride said her beloved is like a roe or a young hart. This suggests the beauty of Christ, the husband of the church; not the physical beauty, but that of his character. Who does not love to look upon the graceful form and movements of the deer? So we should enjoy contemplating the holy character of Jesus Christ and trying to build his beauty into our characters. To fail to enjoy such spiritual exercises is to betray a lack of love for the Lord and a lack of interest in our eternal welfare.

### II. A Lover's Description of Spring

(Sol. 2: 10-14)

*For, lo, the winter is past.* This is the voice of the bridegroom inviting her to come away with him to see and enjoy the beauties of nature in the springtime. She is addressed in tender tones as "my love, my fair one." The winter with its cold is past, and the sun is bathing the earth in warmth that causes all nature to stir and swell with bursting buds of life.

*The rain is over, and gone.* Winter was a cold, rainy season; the rains continued into the spring as intermittent showers, and then quit entirely through the summer. The rain here was one of those spring showers which brighten and freshen all nature and multiplies our joy of living.

*The flowers appear on the earth.* These are not the cultivated shrubs, but the little flowers which in the spring carpet the surface of the earth with such manifold shades and hues that no mortal painter can capture them all with brush and palette.

*The time of the singing of birds is come.* There is nothing more indicative of the approach of spring than the blooming of flowers and the singing of birds. The cooing of the

turtle-dove is mentioned as a specific instance of the singing of the birds. Its cooing is definitely a sign of spring and shows that our poet was acquainted with nature.

*The fig-tree ripeneth her green figs.* This verse turns our attention to that which is not only attractive in both scent and color, but also profitable in the way of food and income. The vines are in blossom and giving forth their fragrance, assurances of food to eat and grape juice to drink.

*Let me see thy countenance.* We must not think of the pair as already being out in the hills among the beauties of nature. These preceding verses simply record the call of the royal lover for his bride to come out and enjoy these things with him. But she is, for some reason not stated, still in her house which he likens to "the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the steep place." He begs to see her countenance.

*Let me hear thy voice.* All the while he has been standing without inviting her to show her face and thrill him with her voice. His reason is all that the loved one could ask and the best the lover could give—"For sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely."

Some lessons suggested: (1) With the coming of Jesus Christ into our life the winter is past and spring with its new life is come into our life. It is also in keeping with this imagery that Christ came to us, he came seeking us, inviting us to the joys of new life.

(2) As the piercing cold of the continual winter rains was gone, so when Jesus comes into our life, the loneliness of being without God is past, and the warmth of the sunshine of his love bathes our heart; we are warmed with his presence.

(3) As the flowers appear and the birds begin to sing in spring, so when Jesus comes into our life the fruits of his presence begin to be manifest. The life is more beautiful and fruitful. There can be no such as beauty of life and fruitfulness and usefulness without Jesus Christ in one's life.

(4) As the bridegroom delighted in the countenance and the voice of his bride, so Jesus finds delight in the praise, adoration, and thanksgiving of his saints.

(5) "Secret religion is not the highest religion. The highest emotions of the soul do not decrease in their power as they are expressed. They become more and more a ruling principle of life. There are many who need this encouragement to come forth out of secrecy, out of solitude, out of their own private home and individual thoughts, and realize the blessing of fellowship with the Lord and with his people." (Pulpit Commentary.)

### III. Love Amid Duties of Springtime

(Sol. 2: 15-17)

*Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vineyards.* It is difficult, perhaps impossible, for us to determine who is the speaker here. Adam Clarke thinks these are the instructions of the bridegroom to his companions, instructing them to catch the foxes and prevent the spoiling of the vineyard while he and his bride continue their visit. Others think these are the words of the bride to her lover and that she bids him work with her to keep the foxes from spoiling the vineyard, which seems to be the best solution of the matter. Foxes were especially fond of grapes, and owners of vineyards were often compelled to guard their vineyards at night, set traps, and in other ways prevent their depredations.

*For our vineyards are in blossom.* This is another indication of the time of the year this part of the poem was written to celebrate.

*My beloved is mine, and I am his.* Certainly these are the words of the bride. She thrills in the realization that she has unquestioned claim to her lover; she has no rivals. The same sentiment may be found in other places in the song. (6: 3; 7: 10.) Just as surely as he belongs to her, so surely and fully she gives herself to him. There is nothing more thrilling or satisfying, nothing that gives sweeter rest and repose, to people who have pledged their love to each other than to hear such sentiment repeated with a show of confidence in the eye and of assurance in the voice.

*He feedeth his flock among the lilies.* The bride likes to think of her lover as a shepherd, partaking of the simple life with her. He feeds them among the lilies. This flower has

always been an emblem of purity. These words may have been spoken to him and were suggested by the perfume which she detected. Though the words *he feedeth* are third person, such is not uncommon in poetry when recording a supposed conversation.

*Until the day be cool, and the shadows flee away.* Though she was slow to accept his invitation to come out, she now invites him to linger with her until the cool of the day, till the shadows cast by the setting sun have vanished.

*Upon the mountains of B ether.* She wishes to see him play as the roe and young hart on the mountains. The word *Bether* means *separation*. Some think a reference is made to the mountains of Beth-horon; others think the reference is to Bithron on the east side of Jordan.

Some lessons suggested: (1) Foxes which destroy the vineyards have long been used to suggest the enemies of our spirituality and spiritual growth. Worldliness, love of money, love of pleasure, lusts of the flesh, hatred, enmity, jealousy, envy are all foxes which destroy the fruit of the Spirit in our life. False doctrines, unscriptural practices, love of power and eminence among elders, preacher

jealousy, and other things are foxes which destroy the Lord's vineyard.

(2) The joy of knowing that we are Christ's and he is ours. There is nothing in this world that can give quite the comfort and peace of mind which comes from the knowledge that we possess Christ and that he possesses us. "It is the undoubted character of all true believers that they are Christ's, and then, and then only, he is theirs; they have given their own selves to him, 2 Cor. 8: 5, they receive his doctrine and obey his law, they bear his image, and espouse his interest; they belong to Christ. If we be his, his only, his forever, we may take the comfort of his being ours." (M. Henry.)

(3) As the bride invited her lover to stay with her to the close of the day, so we should pray our Lord to be with us to the close of life's day. We need him all the day long. There is never a time in the day of life that we do not need him to keep us from evil, to comfort us in sorrow, to strengthen us for trials, and guide us in the ways of purity. He who fails to realize this and leans upon his own wisdom and strength is foolish and sure to fail.

### Questions for the Class

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

#### Golden Text Explained

What is the setting of the text?  
Who is the speaker?  
What is meant by being under his banner?  
Explain how Jesus conquers us under the banner of love.  
Show how Jesus sustains and guides us under the banner of love.  
Show how love determines what he has done and will do for us in the matter of rewards.

#### Introduction

State and discuss three theories of the interpretation of Song of Solomon.  
What historical basis is there for this love song?  
What is the main purpose of the poem?  
Can you show that the song was written in the early part of Solomon's reign?

#### The Coming of the Beloved

Describe the mental picture you have of this lover coming to see his bride?  
What lesson is taught concerning our hearing the voice of our Lord?  
How did Jesus overcome the difficulty of communion with us in spite of our sin?  
What expression suggests the beauty of Christ and what kind of beauty?

What should be our response to his beauty of holiness?

#### A Lover's Description of Spring

What is meant by the passing of winter in this poem?  
What other objects of nature does the poet use to describe springtime?  
Did the bride respond quickly to the lover's invitation to come out to meet him?  
How is the coming of Jesus into our life like the coming of spring?  
Why is the coming of Jesus into our life like the coming of flowers and birds in spring?  
What is suggested by the delight of the bridegroom in the countenance and voice of his bride?

#### Love Amid Duties of Springtime

What was mentioned as spoiling the vineyards?  
Where was the bridegroom said to feed his flock?  
What invitation did the bride give her lover?  
What sins in individuals are suggested by foxes and what sins in churches?  
What is the greatest possession of the Christian and the greatest joy?  
What is suggested by the invitation of the bride to the bridegroom to stay with her till the close of the day?

Lesson XIII—September 23, 1956

**JEREMIAH'S SONG OF SORROW FOR ZION**

**Lesson Text**

Lam. 2: 11-16; 3: 48-51

11 Mine eyes do fail with tears, my heart is troubled; My liver is poured upon the earth, because of the destruction of the daughter of my people, Because the young children and the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city.

12 They say to their mothers, Where is grain and wine? When they swoon as the wounded in the streets of the city, When their soul is poured out into their mothers' bosom.

13 What shall I testify unto thee? what shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Je-ru'-sa-lem? What shall I compare to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of ZI'-6n? For thy breach is great like the sea: who can heal thee?

14 Thy prophets have seen for thee false and foolish visions; And they have not uncovered thine iniquity, to bring back thy captivity, But have

seen for thee false oracles and causes of banishment.

15 All that pass by clap their hands at thee; They hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Je-ru'-sa-lem, saying, Is this the city that men called The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?

16 All thine enemies have opened their mouth wide against thee; They hiss and gnash the teeth; they say, We have swallowed her up; Certainly this is the day that we looked for; we have found, we have seen it.

48 Mine eye runneth down with streams of water, for the destruction of the daughter of my people.

49 Mine eye poureth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission, 50 Till Je-ho'-vah look down, and behold from heaven.

51 Mine eye affecteth my soul, because of all the daughters of my city.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion." (Psalm 137: 1.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Lam. 2: 1-10.

**Daily Bible Readings**

- September 17. M. . . . . Jeremiah Laments Over Josiah (2 Chron. 35: 20-27)
- September 18. T. . . . . Jeremiah Weeps Over Wicked (Jer. 12: 1-13)
- September 19. W. . . . . Jeremiah Weeps Over Jerusalem (Jer. 4: 14-18)
- September 20. T. . . . . Jeremiah's Sorrow for Zion (Jer. 8: 18-22)
- September 21. F. . . . . Jeremiah's Grief (Jer. 10: 18-22)
- September 22. S. . . . . Cry of Jerusalem Gone Up (Jer. 14: 1-9)
- September 23. S. . . . . Jeremiah's Acknowledges People's Sin (Jer. 14: 19-22)

TIME.—About 588 B.C.

PLACE.—Unknown.

PERSONS.—Jeremiah and the captives in Babylon.

**Golden Text Explained**

1. The people taken into captivity. When Judah had sinned until there was no remedy, Jehovah said, though Moses and Samuel stood before him to plead for them, he would not spare them, so he appointed "the sword to slay, and the dogs to tear, and the birds of the heavens, and beasts of the earth, to devour and to destroy." (Jer. 15: 1-4.) Such terrible fate had to be preceded and caused by

unusual conditions, so we read that "the people trespassed very greatly after all the abominations of the nations; and they polluted the house of Jehovah which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. And Jehovah, the God of their fathers, sent to them by his messengers, rising up early and sending, because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place: but they mocked the messen-

gers of God, and despised his words, and scoffed at his prophets, until the wrath of Jehovah arose against his people, till there was no remedy." (2 Chron. 36: 14-16.) The Babylonians made three separate raids on Judah. (1) When Jehoiakim was king, many princes and nobles were taken; Daniel was taken in this raid, 607 B.C. (Dan. 1: 1-3.) (2) When Jehoiachin was king, ten thousand of the chief of the people were taken by Nebuchadnezzar in 599 B.C. (2 Kings 24: 10-17.) (3) The third raid was during the reign of Zedekiah, and practically all the people were taken; this was in 586 B.C. It was at this time that Jeremiah was given his choice whether he would go into captivity or remain with a group of people whom the captors could trust, and he chose to remain in his native land. (2 Kings 25: 1-12; Jer. 40: 1-6.)

2. Their sorrows in captivity, (a) They sorrowed most on account of being separated from Zion and the worship of the temple. They realized that their captivity was proof of their sinfulness and unworthiness to remain in the city where Jehovah recorded his name and where his worship was celebrated. This separation from God brought them to a realization of their need of God, both for themselves and their children. They could no longer go to the annual feasts to worship Jehovah and to enjoy the fellowship of their brethren. Their children could never know the meaning of those feasts which perpetuated memories of God's dealings with them in the past, (b) Their captors tormented them. There is no indication that the Babylonians mal-

treated them as did the Egyptians, but they added to their miseries by reminding them of their sins and sorrows. "For there they that led us captives required of us songs, and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion." (Psalm 137: 3.) (c) They cultivated resentment and longed for the day when Babylon would suffer as Jerusalem had suffered. "Happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the rock." (Psalm 137: 8, 9.)

3. Their memories in captivity. Memory may be a source of joy or pain. We remember with joy the things wherein we did right and pleased the Lord; but we remember with pain the things of our past wherein we went contrary to the Lord's will. The Jews wept when they remembered Zion because they did not do the things which ministered to the peace of Zion. If they had walked uprightly, Zion would never have been destroyed; the city would never have become a hiss and a by-word among nations. They rejected God's prophets and despised his message through the prophets, and the memory of this course of action brought tears to their eyes and pain to their hearts. The rich man in Hades remembered his folly after it was too late to make correction; he remembered his wayward brethren after he was too far away from them to do them any good. (Luke 16: 25ff.) Let us be sure we live in such way that memories will be a joy to us rather than a pain.

## Introduction

All antiquity attributes the book of lamentations to Jeremiah, the weeping prophet. However, some of the modern scholars deny that Jeremiah wrote it, saying that much of it is "too elaborately artificial to have been the work of Jeremiah sitting amid the ruins of Jerusalem." Some who hold to the idea that Jeremiah wrote the book make the mistake of thinking they have scriptural proof in that mention is made of the fact that Jeremiah wrote a lamentation for Josiah on his untimely death and was in existence at the time of the

writing of the books of Chronicles. (2 Chron. 35: 25.) But our book is not the one he wrote concerning the death of Josiah, but one written lamenting the destruction of Jerusalem.

There are five separate poems, or elegies. Four of these elegies have twenty-two verses each, and the third has sixty-six. Each one is acrostic in style, though the order of the alphabet is changed in one so that, some authors say, it was not intended to be acrostic.

"This poem affords the most elegant variety of affecting images that ever,

probably, were collected into so small a compass. The scenes of affliction, the circumstances of distress, are painted with such beautiful combination, that we contemplate everywhere the most affecting picture of desolation and misery. The prophet reiterates his complaints in the pathetic style; and aggravates his sorrow with a boldness and force of description that correspond with the magnitude and religious importance of the calamities displayed to view. In the instructive strains of an inspired writer, he reminds his countrymen of the grievous rebellions which had provoked the Lord to 'abhor his sanctuary,' confesses that 'it was of God's mercies that they were not utterly consumed'; and points out the sources of evil in the iniquities of

the false prophets and priests." (M. Henry.)

"The use of the book was, no doubt, to the pious Jews in their sufferings, furnishing them with spiritual language to express their natural grief by; helping to preserve the lively remembrance of Zion among them and their children that never saw it, when they were in Babylon; directing their tears into the right channel; for they are here taught to mourn for sin, and mourn to God; and, withal, encouraging their hopes that God would yet return and have mercy upon them; and it is of use to us to affect us to godly sorrow for the calamities of the church of God, as becomes those that are living members of it, and are resolved to take their lot with it." (Ibid.)

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Sorrow for Condition of Captives (Lam. 2: 11-13)

*Mine eyes do fail with tears, my heart is troubled.* The prophet says he has wept until there are no more tears to shed. His outward show of emotion has been so excessive that he is no longer able to manifest his grief. Not only is he affected outwardly, but his heart is troubled, he is in turmoil inwardly. So great is this inward turmoil that he says his liver is poured out upon the earth. "A violent emotion being supposed to occasion a copious discharge of bile." Excessive sorrow over a long period of time will tend to render unbalanced the nervous and digestive systems in such way as is suggested by this language.

*Because of the destruction of the daughter of my people.* This is a poetic reference to Jerusalem, the city of Zion. The destruction of that city by Nebuchadnezzar was as brutal as it was thorough. Jeremiah lived through the last days, during which he made every effort possible to save the city from destruction. He delivered messages to the men in power to make decisions, directing them to give themselves up to the Babylonians, assuring them that to do so would mean the salvation of the city, but to resist the army would mean the destruction of the city. They foolishly followed the counsel of false prophets, hoped for deliverance elsewhere, and suffered for

their folly by seeing their beloved city burned, the holy vessels of the temple taken away, and their men, women, and children chained together and taken into captivity. Scott has a practical observation which is worthy of meditation: "The mercy of God is immense and everlasting toward those that fear him, but no external relations, privileges, or profession, by which men may be exalted, as it were, to heaven, can avail those who have not the fear of God before their eyes: for . . . if he did not regard his temple, the ark of his covenant, or the families of Aaron and David; if he cast off his altar, abhorred his sanctuary, and let the heathen profane his most holy place, when the Jews had defiled them by their sins; what hope can there be that he will regard any forms, doctrines, ordinances, and regulations where the power of godliness is wanting?" (M. Henry's Commentary.)

*Young children and the sucklings swoon in the streets.* According to 2 Kings 25: 1-3, the siege of the city by Nebuchadnezzar lasted eighteen months, when a breach was made in the wall and the city was taken. During these months the food supply was exhausted and famine and disease were prevalent. Children begged their mothers for grain and wine but went unfed, finally to fall in the streets because of weakness.

*When their soul is poured out into their mothers' bosom.* This is a description of the death of infants as they tried in vain to get nourishment from the mother's breasts. On account of lack of food the mother had no nourishment for the infant, and while it tried in vain to get nourishment, it breathed its last breath into the mother's bosom. Such conditions and experiences as these are enough to move the observer to the excessive sorrow mentioned in the verse above.

*What shall I testify unto thee?* The prophet is lost in his search for words or figures to use to bring comfort to the sorrowing captives, or to Jerusalem, the personification of all the sorrowing people in the city. He is unable to name another city which has suffered such a fate as this that he might bring comfort from one in similar conditions. The old saying, "misery loves company," suggests somewhat the thought of the prophet. If he could bring up the example of another city which had suffered as much as Zion, there would be some comfort to know that his people were not alone in their suffering, that others had suffered as much as they. But he is unable to point his finger to another that has so suffered.

*For thy breach is great like the sea.* This presents the picture of a sea wall that has been broken and the flood waters are inundating the land. Their sorrow and suffering have broken their bounds, and the people of Jerusalem are flooded. Then the prophet asks, who can heal thee? They have rejected Jehovah, and he is allowing the enemy to afflict them with these sufferings, so they cannot look to God for relief. No man is able to heal the breach and stop the suffering. When people reject God, there is no place or person to whom they can go when trouble overwhelms them. Those who are indifferent to God and the church today would do well to give this thought special attention.

## II. False Prophets Charged with Responsibility (Lam. 2: 14-16)

*They prophets have seen for thee false and foolish visions.* Jehovah told Jeremiah to put "bonds and bars" on his neck and tell the people not to listen to prophets who were saying that the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar

would soon be broken, and all the vessels taken by him from the temple would soon be restored. One prophet, Hananiah, took the bar off Jeremiah's neck and broke it, saying that within two years the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar would be broken. (Jer. 28.) Of all such prophets Jehovah said through Jeremiah, "The prophets prophesy lies in my name; I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake I unto them: they prophesy unto you a lying vision, and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their own heart. Therefore thus saith Jehovah concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land: By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed. And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword; and they shall have none to bury them—their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters: for I will pour their wickedness upon them." (Jer. 14: 14-16.)

*They have not uncovered thine iniquity.* This is what the prophets should have done, but instead of doing so they prophesied ease and peace. (Jer. 6: 13-15.) This has always been the problem of preachers; they are by nature inclined to be sympathetic with people and wish to please them; they are by force of their dependency upon the liberality of people inclined to please them. There is no sin in feeling this inclination, but there certainly is grievous sin in giving way to it in any degree. Paul predicted the time would come when people would heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts and would be turned away from the truth and be turned unto fables. (2 Tim. 4: 3, 4.) And there have always been some preachers who would satisfy the itching ears of the people and preach like they demand; it was so in the days of Jeremiah. And these preachers in his day were to blame for the condition of the people. If they had uncovered the iniquity of the people, they might have turned them from sin and saved them all their suffering and the destruction of their holy city. Churches should honor the preacher who will expose sin both in and out of the

church. Such preachers should be encouraged, for the salvation of souls and the prosperity of the kingdom of God depend on such preaching. Certainly such preaching should be done in love, but it should be *done*.

*All that pass by clap their hands at thee.* This is in fulfillment of a prophecy uttered by Moses long before Israel ever became a nation. "And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all the peoples whither Jehovah shall lead thee." (Deut. 28:37.) This is another illustration of the truth that people reap what they sow. God is not mocked; there is no such thing as putting things by him and averting the suffering that follows as a natural consequence of wrongdoing.

*Is this the city that men called The perfection of beauty?* This is one of the most terrible things about sin. There was a time when Jerusalem merited in some measure this title; she enjoyed the praise and honor of the nations; kings and queens came to visit her great kings and said, The half had not been told me. But now her people are starving, infants breathe out their souls in the bosom of their mothers, the city is a heap of ruins. Why? Her people have sinned until God will not listen to them. God placed his name in this city at one time, but now he will not own it. His name has been dishonored. People hiss and jeer at the city he chose and honored with his presence. The church is made to suffer for the same reason today. People have been known to say in the same jeering tones, Is this the church that is right and cannot be wrong? Is this the church that speaks where the Bible speaks and is silent where the Bible is silent? And why? Because members of the church are living in sin, or maybe a congregation is having internal trouble, or perhaps a congregation is too indifferent to carry on a good program of work and worship. As Jeremiah wept over the condition of Zion, so those who love the Lord are made to weep over the condition of the church in some places.

### III. Expressions of Extreme Grief

(Lam. 3: 48-51)

*Mine eye runneth down with*

*streams of water.* The expressions in these verses are poetic hyperbole and are made for the purpose of conveying in the strongest terms possible the most excessive grief. And again we have the city of Jerusalem referred to as the daughter of my people. This city is the object of the prophet's attention and its condition the cause of all his grief. Some one has suggested that here is religion and patriotism tied together, both of them existing to such degree that neither patriot nor saint can equal Jeremiah in his feelings for Jerusalem.

*Till Jehovah look down.* Is this an intimation of hope? If so, it is the first we have found in this lesson. One smile from Jehovah and all tears will be dried, all burdens will be lifted, and the sun will shine again. The experiences of the people of old teach us these lessons. How fortunate we of this generation are! There was a time when people did not have a written record of God's dealings with men as we have it today. They could not profit from a knowledge of what sin will do for men, or how God will punish people who turn away from him. We have such a record, and only lack of interest in our welfare or unbelief of the message from God can cause us to turn from him without knowing the consequences.

*Mine eye affecteth my soul.* Really it was not the eye that affected his soul, but it was what his eye beheld that troubled his soul. He saw nothing but death and desolation wherever he looked. Famine and disease took their toll of men physically, while false prophets misled the people spiritually. Satan and his forces were triumphing victoriously over the city where God's name was once recorded and which was gladdened by his presence and where the shouts of joy rose from happy worshipers of Jehovah. This was enough to trouble the soul of any man who loved Jehovah and respected his Holy name.

*All the daughters of my city.* This is a reference to the small towns and villages of Judah surrounding Jerusalem. These cities suffered too in the fall of Jerusalem.

### Lessons to Learn

1. Children are often made to suffer with parents while they are yet too young to know why they are suffering, much less to be responsible for any of the suffering. People who so live as to bring suffering on their children cannot claim to love them.

2. As parents have it within their power to make of their children what they wish them to be, so the teachers in the church can largely determine what the church will be. If the church departs from the faith, the responsibility rests upon the teachers;

the group has failed to uncover iniquity soon enough and forcefully enough. A church can go wrong in spite of the teaching of one man, but if the group of teachers will stand together and expose sin, they can hold the people in line.

3. Grief for sin will not undo the wrong nor atone it. Neither will our grief for our sins mend the broken lives that suffer as a result of our sins. The best and safest policy is to "turn away from evil, and do good."

### Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

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

#### Golden Text Explained

What two great names are used to show the depth of sin into which Israel had gone?

What did God appoint to punish the people of Judah for their sins?

What did the writer of Chronicles say about the sins of Judah?

What do you know of the three raids made on Jerusalem to take the people captive?

State and discuss three sources of the sorrows of the captives.

What is said of the memories of the people in captivity?

#### Introduction

What do you know of the author of Lamentations?

Of what is the book composed?

What can you say of the contents of the book?

What use did the Jews make of the book?

#### Sorrow for Condition of Captives

What is said of the prophet's inward sorrow and his outward show of sorrow?

What is meant by the expression "daughter of my people"?

What advice did Jeremiah give the rulers of Jerusalem?

Was it heeded?

What practical lesson can we get from the fact that God refused to spare Jerusalem?

What do you know of conditions during the siege of the city?

What is said of infants during this time of suffering?

What is suggested by the statement that their breach was great like the sea?

#### False Prophets Charged with Responsibility

What did Jeremiah put on his neck?

For what purpose?

What did Hananiah predict?

What did God say about the false prophets?

What is meant by uncovering iniquity?

Whose duty is it now to do so?

What are some of the forces which incline preachers to fail to uncover sin?

What did Moses predict with reference to the Jews?

What humiliating statement did men make about Jerusalem when it was destroyed?

How may the church be ridiculed in this manner?

#### Expressions of Extreme Grief

What are some of the extreme expressions of grief?

What intimates that Jeremiah entertained some hope of better days?

What advantage do we have over the people of long ago in these matters?

How did the prophet's eyes affect his soul?

What is meant by the daughters of my city.

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

## Lesson XIV—September 30, 1956

### THE MISERY OF CAPTIVITY

#### Lesson Text

1 Remember, O Je-ho'-vah, what we have done: We are orphans and fatherless; come upon us: Behold, and see our reproach. Our mothers are as widows.

2 Our inheritance is turned unto strangers, Our houses unto aliens. 4 We have drunken our water for money; Our wood is sold unto us.

5 Our pursuers are upon our necks:

We are weary, and have no rest.

6 We have given the hand to the E-gyp'-tians, And to the As-syr'-i-ans, to be satisfied with bread.

7 Our fathers sinned, and are not; And we have borne their iniquities.

8 Servants rule over us: There is

none to deliver us out of their hand, 9 We get our bread at the peril of our lives, Because of the sword of the wilderness.

10 Our skin is black like an oven, Because of the burning heat of famine.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Woe unto us! for we have sinned." (Lam. 5: 16b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Lam. 5: 11-18.

### Daily Bible Readings

September 24.	M.	.....	Weeping in Babylon (Psalm 137: 1-4)
September 25.	T.	.....	Nehemiah Weeps Over Jerusalem (Neh. 1: 1-11)
September 26.	W.	.....	Captivity Foretold (Jer. 25: 2-11)
September 27.	T.	.....	Prophecy Fulfilled (2 Kings 24: 10-17)
September 28.	F.	.....	Reason for Captivity (Ezek. 29: 21-24)
September 29.	S.	.....	Promise of Return from Captivity (Ezek. 39: 25-29)
September 30.	S.	.....	Cyrus' Proclamation (Ezra 1: 1-11)

TIME.—About 588 B.C.

PLACE.—Unknown.

PERSONS.—Jeremiah and the captives in Babylon.

### Golden Text Explained

1. Realization of our sins. In our text, Jeremiah is confessing the sins of the nations. He could truthfully say he had no part in committing the sin. He did his best to turn the nation from sin and save them from such suffering. But he accepts the sin of the nation as his own, or at least identifies himself with a nation that has sinned grievously against Jehovah. A better illustration of a prophet's identifying himself with the nation in its sin is found in Ezra 9: 5ff. (a) A sinner must be made to realize his sins before he can be saved. We sometimes lose a lot of precious time trying to convince a person that he should repent and be baptized for the remission of his sins when we should be trying to convince him that he is a sinner. Some brethren refuse to bring their neighbors because the preacher may say something contrary to their belief. If we never teach on points of truth wherein others are in error, we will never convict them of sin and make them realize they need salvation, (b) Many brethren dislike for the preacher to expose sin among church members. But if we are never told of our sins, we may live and die in them. We need to hear our sins exposed and condemned; we need to hear the penalty for such sins, and have the consequences of our sins described in their awful details; and

we need to be urged to flee from the wrath which is sure to be visited upon such sins.

2. We need to recognize the hand of God in our suffering for our sins. Ever since the beginning of human governments men have forgotten God and have conducted the affairs of government in such way that God has had to punish the nations. Many nations have become so ungodly that they had to be destroyed. The Old Testament is filled with records of such national punishments. Is there any reason why God should so change in his conduct of the affairs of the universe that he is no longer interested in the righteousness of the rulers? Has he so far withdrawn himself from national affairs that he will not punish a nation like he punished Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon? As God has been interested in the affairs of nations, so he has been interested in the affairs of individuals. However, men do not receive all their punishment for sins in this life. And, perhaps for this reason, they do not see the hand of God in their suffering for sins. But if people can be led to realize that sin brings suffering, and then can be led to know what sin is, they will be more likely to refrain from sin, or turn from sin in which they are already involved. There is a need for a return to teaching about sin. People need to know

what sin is, what sin will do for them, and what they must do to be saved from sin. Too many teachers are spending too much time talking about social betterment and things of that nature as compared to the time they spend teaching people what they need to know about sin.

3. Cure for our sins. In the conclusion of the chapter the prophet pleads, "Turn thou us unto thee, O Jehovah, and we shall be turned." A return to Jehovah is the cure for sin both of individuals and nations. If someone thinks the prophet's words give too much the idea that God is to do the turning, he might consider Peter's statement that God sent Jesus

"to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities," (Acts 3: 26.) Yes, there is a sense in which God turns us from sin unto himself. The gift of his Son to die for our sins; the publication of his glorious gospel; and the work of his people in our behalf are all efforts on God's part to turn us to himself. We must turn in the sense that we believe the gospel, determine to love God and his Son, and make up our minds to quit sin and live righteous lives. But whether we look upon it as God turning us, or as it is in truth a combination of his efforts to turn us and our turning to him, this is the cure for sin in individuals and in nations.

### Introduction

The people of Israel put their trust in false prophets and in help from Egypt, so would not turn to the Lord for help and guidance. Jeremiah said it was because of the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests. (Lam. 4: 13.) We learned last week how a prophet treated Jeremiah, the prediction the false prophet made, and the punishment brought upon him. This week we will see how the people put their trust in Egypt and how Jeremiah suffered because he counseled the people to submit to the Chaldeans. When the Chaldeans were besieging Jerusalem, the Egyptians came up to give assistance to Judah. The Chaldeans had to take out time to defeat the Egyptians, so lifted the siege. When this was done, the prophets who favored turning to Egypt for help were happy, and from outward appearances they were right and Jeremiah was wrong. However Jeremiah was given a message to deliver, saying that the Egyptian help would not be worth while and that the army of the Chaldeans would return; and even if all the Chaldean soldiers were crippled, they would yet return and burn the city. (Jer. 37: 6-10.) When the siege was lifted, Jeremiah went from Jerusalem to the land of Benjamin to see about his property. When he arrived there he was accused of "falling away to the Chaldeans." The people thought he was

a Chaldean sympathizer and a traitor to their national cause. So he was arrested and put in prison. Zedekiah, the king, heard of it and rescued him from the prison, but kept him under guard. The people wanted to hear the things the false prophets were saying instead of the messages of God through Jeremiah. The false prophets were saying easy comforting things, while Jeremiah was telling them to repent, return to God the hard way. The punishment during the captivity was to teach them to look to Jehovah instead of to the power and wisdom of man; to teach them to turn to Jehovah with all their hearts instead of turning to idols. While their suffering in Babylon was terrible, we may be sure it was not more than the wisdom of God knew was needed to teach his people the lessons they needed. We may also see in these experiences how children may suffer for the sins of their fathers. The generation that suffered was not guilty of all the sins for which they suffered; they suffered the consequences of the sins of the nation committed over a long period of years. (Ex. 34: 7.) The sins of the nation for generations taught this generation principles that only such suffering could correct. That the suffering in captivity accomplished the purpose of God is seen in the fact that the Jews were forever cured of their idolatry.

## Exposition of the Text

### I. Misery on Account of Poverty

(Lam. 5: 1-5)

*Remember, O Jehovah, what is come upon us.* When people are in sorrow, they are apt to think God has forgotten them. The prophet speaks as if Jehovah was not cognizant of their condition, and he wishes him to remember and behold and see their condition. God could well have reminded the people of all his messages which they rejected and of the prophets which they despised and persecuted (2 Chron. 36: 14-16), but that would not have helped them in their present condition. To remind sufferers of the sins which brought on the suffering while doing nothing to help them turn from those sins is little and mean but to lead people to think upon the sins which brought them to poverty and ruin with a view to leading them to turn from their sins is a righteous thing.

*Our inheritance is turned unto strangers,* (a) The people failed to realize that they held the land of Canaan on conditions. Their forefathers were given the land on the condition they would be obedient to Jehovah, being told that if they became disobedient they would be removed from the land. (Deut. 11: 8-32.) Nowhere is God's mercy and longsuffering illustrated to better advantage than in his postponing the punishment of Israel for their failure to obey him that they might live in the land he gave them, (b) They attached too much importance to Canaan, their temporal home, and did not think enough about heaven, their eternal home. That is characteristic of humanity. We are guilty of the same mistake. The fact that they were going contrary to the wishes of Jehovah and were disinherited and bereaved of their eternal home had not brought them to their knees; but when they were taken into a strange land and their own land was given unto strangers and their houses to aliens, their sorrow seemed more than they could bear.

*We are orphans and fatherless.* Many of them were literally fatherless because of the terrible loss of men during the capture of Jerusalem. But perhaps the picture here is of a whole nation of people looking upon themselves as orphans because of

their destitute condition. The condition of orphans and widows before the teaching of Christ laid God's people under special obligations to them was the hardest lot known to any class of humanity. So the prophet simply uses this figure to represent the lot of the people as being most pitiable.

*We have drunken our water for money.* This suggests that they had to pay for the water they drank and the wood which they burned. Formerly they had had these things for the taking. Now, under the lords of the Chaldeans, they must buy the most common necessities of life. This not only added to their poverty, but made them realize more and more what it meant to be captives of a strange people; it was one feature which contributed to making their captive yoke more galling.

*Our pursuers are upon our necks.* The prophet likens their condition to that of a man being pursued and caught and the captors have a yoke on his neck. The captor is like a yoke in that his demands are galling, the weight of his law is oppressive to people who have been free. Servitude was especially oppressive to a people who thought their relation to Jehovah was such that he would not allow them to be in bondage to others.

*We are weary, and have no rest.* Here is sounded a note of discouragement and a word of complaint. But it is not the kind of complaint which tends to justify oneself in his sins and seeks to put the blame on another. This is the kind of complaint that accepts full responsibility for his sins, concedes that his punishment is just, and falls upon the mercy of God if perhaps he may find mercy and relief or strength to bear his punishment.

### II. Misery on Account of Governments (Lam. 5: 6-10)

*We have given the hand to the Egyptians.* To "give the hand" means to surrender and ask for favors. Whether this means that a part of the people went into Egypt, or refers to their request for assistance from Egypt to keep from surrendering to the army of the Chaldeans is not clear. Some of the people later went into Egypt, and it is thought by many

that Jeremiah went with a group, or was taken by force, and that he spent his last days there. But they could hope for little better treatment at the hands of the Egyptians than they received at the hands of the Babylonians.

*And to the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread.* The Babylonian captors are here called Assyrians. That which is usually referred to as the Assyrian kingdom and which nation carried the ten tribes into captivity and had Nineveh as its capital had fallen one-third to one-half a century before the time of our lesson. The Babylonian empire covered more territory than the Assyrian, but much of it was the same. Some maps have all the country between Armenia and the Persian Gulf under the combined name of Assyria-Babylonia. The prophet laments the fact that they got nothing but bread for their service. This marks them as servants, slaves, of the most abject kind.

*Our fathers sinned, and are not.* This statement implies that the generation in which Jeremiah lived did not bring all that suffering on themselves. Their fathers sinned, but the national punishment was not brought upon them; it was reserved for the generation in the time of Jeremiah. We have no way of knowing why the national punishment was brought upon that generation and not upon one later or one earlier. We must leave such matters to God who knows best what to do and when to do it.

*And we have borne their iniquities.* Jehovah says he will visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations. (Ex. 20: 5; 34: 7.) Some think this is a contradiction of what Jeremiah says, "In those days they shall say no more. The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge." (Jer. 31: 29, 30.) This can hardly be taken as a contradiction to what Moses said since Jeremiah says the same thing Moses said, "Who showest loving-kindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them." (Jer. 32: 18.) Jehovah does visit the iniquity of parents upon their children in that they reap the

consequences of the sins of their parents. But no child suffers the guilt of the sins of his parents. We suffer *consequences* of the sins of our parents, but we are *not guilty* of one single sin committed by our parents. Suffering terrible consequences of parental sins does not condemn the child; only our own sins can condemn us. Even while the Jews were suffering the consequences of the sins of their fathers, if their personal life was acceptable to Jehovah, they could enjoy the closest fellowship and communion. One today may be suffering some physical handicap or a dreadful disease as a consequence of the sins of his fathers, but he may personally be a faithful Christian walking in the closest fellowship with the Lord. Or one may have had Christian parents for many generations back and may not be suffering any consequences of the sins of his forefathers, but for his own sin may be separated from God and be lost eternally.

*Servants rule over us.* They were in such abject slavery that they had no right to appeal to the king or high courts of the land; their grievances were settled by those of least authority in the land. They were perhaps obliged to be satisfied with the decisions of the guard who was immediately in charge of them. Soldiers who had no knowledge of Jehovah and very little respect for human life, and who would delight in the exercise of a little authority over other people would make hard masters.

*We get our bread at the peril of our lives.* They seem not to have had much protection from the Babylonian government, and when they went into the fields to work, especially in harvest, marauding bands of thieves often attempted to take their grain from them. The prophet says their lives were imperiled "because of the sword of the wilderness." This suggests that outlaw bands preyed upon them, and no one cared enough to give them the protection they needed.

*Our skin is black like an oven.* This came about as a result of the "burning heat of famine." Long hot dry periods brought on famine; this same heat baked their skin and made it as black as an oven. In these verses we see they suffered from a

lack of food, lack of clothes, lack of protection of life, lack of capable sympathetic rulers. Their lot was hard. Their hope lay in their ability to see in this God's punishment of the people for their sins, which punishment was brought upon them

to turn them away from idols to serve the living and true God. In many of them this punishment accomplished its God-given mission, and they returned to rejoice in the privilege of worshiping Jehovah in Jerusalem.

### Lessons to Learn

1. God is too merciful to punish us more severely than we deserve or can bear; he is too just to neglect to punish us enough to accomplish his purposes.

2. There is such a thing as national responsibility to God. Nations are prospered when they recognize God and honor him by maintaining high moral levels; they are punished when they ignore his authority over them and chart their own low moral course.

3. We should walk uprightly for the sake of unborn generations, lest they suffer the consequences of our sins. While suffering consequences does not make them guilty before God, that suffering might make it difficult for them to serve God, so it might not only make them miserable during life, but might be a contributing cause of their being lost. Sin is so terrible that none can measure its consequences here or hereafter.

### Questions for the Class

What is the topic of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

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

#### Golden Text Explained

Whose sin did Jeremiah confess in our text?

What other Jewish prophet identified himself with the nation's sin?

Why must a sinner be made to realize his sins?

What benefit is to be derived from hearing our sins exposed?

Does God punish nations, or is he merely interested in individuals?

Do preachers say enough now about sin and its consequences?

What cure does Jeremiah suggest for sin?

What part does God have, and what part do we have in our turning from sin?

#### Introduction

In what nation did the people of Judah put their trust for deliverance?

What incident made Jeremiah appear to be wrong in his predictions and counsel?

Of what was Jeremiah accused?

What was done with him?

What was God's purpose in punishing the Jews?

What indication do we have that the punishment accomplished God's purpose?

#### Misery on Account of Poverty

Why did God seem to be unmindful of the condition of the captives?

On what condition did the Jews hold the land of Canaan?

Can you show how they attached too much importance to dwelling in Canaan?

To what human relationship did they liken their condition in captivity?

What was said of their water and wood?

What is meant by their pursuers being on their necks?

What kind of complaint did the prophet make?

#### Misery on Account of Governments

What is meant by "giving the hand" to others?

To what two nations did they give their hands?

By what other name are the Babylonians called in our text?

What do you know of the nation usually called Assyrian in the Old Testament?

For whose sins did that generation of Jews suffer?

In what way can children suffer for the sins of their parents?

What is there about the sins of parents which cannot be passed on to children?

What type of government made their state more miserable?

To what danger were they subjected to get their bread?

What is said of their skin?

What is implied by it?

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



## FOURTH QUARTER

### PETER AND HIS EPISTLES

AIM—To study the more important events in the life of the impetuous apostle, and to learn lessons of faithfulness and fortitude from his epistles.

#### Lesson I—October 7, 1956

### PETER BECOMES A FISHER OF MEN

#### Lesson Text

1 Now it came to pass, while <sup>the</sup> multitude pressed upon him and heard the word of God, that he was standing by the lake of Gen-nes'-a-ret;

2 And he saw two boats standing by the lake: but the fishermen had gone out of them, and were washing their nets.

3 And he entered into one of the boats, which was Si'-mon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the multitudes out of the boat.

4 And when he had left speaking, he said unto Si'-mon, Put out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

5 And Si'-mon answered and said, Master, we toiled all night, and took nothing; but at thy word I will let down the nets.

6 And when they had done this, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes; and their nets were breaking;

7 And they beckoned unto their partners in the other boat, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.

8 But Si'-mon Peter, when he saw it, fell down at Je'-sus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

9 For he was amazed, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken;

10 And so were also James and John, sons of Zeb'-e-dee, who were partners with Si'-mon. And Je'-sus said unto Si'-mon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

11 And when they had brought their boats to land, they left all, and followed him.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And he saith unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men." (Matt. 4: 19.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—John 1: 35-42.

#### Daily Bible Readings

October 1.	M.	Andrew Brings Peter to Jesus (John 1: 35-42)
October 2.	T.	Example of Personal Evangelism (John 1: 43-51)
October 3.	W.	Soul Winners Wise (Proverbs 11: 27-31)
October 4.	T.	Reward of Soul Winners (Dan. 12: 1-4)
October 5.	F.	Save a Brother from Death (James 5: 19, 20)
October 6.	S.	Early Church Evangelized (Acts 8: 1-4)
October 7.	S.	Fishermen Called (Matt. 4: 18-22)

TIME.—A.D. 27.

PLACE.—Lake Gennesaret.

PERSONS.—Jesus, Peter, James, and John.

#### Golden Text Explained

1. Come ye after me. (a) Must become a Christian. In order to be a follower of Christ, one must become a Christian. There is no such thing as following Christ without being in Christ. And to be in Christ is to be a new creature. (2 Cor. 5: 17.) In becoming a new creature, one must

be born again, but to be born again is to be born of the water and the Spirit (John 3: 5.) Jesus tells us that this birth of water and the Spirit brings us into the kingdom. But since the kingdom is the church, one who has been born again is a new creature, is a member of the church

which Jesus established. But no one can be a member of the church without becoming obedient to the gospel. We learn that three thousand people obeyed the gospel on the day of Pentecost, and the Lord added them to his church. (Acts 2: 47.) All of this is involved in following the admonition of Jesus to come after or follow him. (b) Follow his example of life. Not only must one become a Christian in order to be a follower of Jesus, but after becoming a Christian he must follow the teaching and example of Jesus in his daily life. There is no such thing as being a Christian in the sense in which that term is used in the New Testament without accepting the manner of life which Jesus exemplified in his life, and which he teaches through his word that we are to live. In following the example of his life, we must think his thoughts as nearly as possible; we must regulate our conversation to be pure and wholesome and ennobling, as was his, and our deeds must be such as will encourage others to refrain from sin and to spend this life in doing good, (c) These things essential to becoming fishers of men. No one can be a fisher of men who has never himself become a Christian. People will not listen to one's teaching unless that one is living in harmony with the things he teaches. Paul tells us that, though we have the tongues of men and of angels, if we have not that love that leads us to live in harmony with the teaching of Jesus, we are become as sounding brass or clanging cymbal. (1 Cor. 13: 1.) So if we are going to become fishers of men, take men captive for Jesus Christ, we must ourselves obey the gospel and then live in harmony with the moral and spiritual standards of the gospel in order that we may both by our teaching and our example influence men to be what Jesus wants them to be.

2. Fishers of men. (a) must realize that men are lost. In order for one to become an effective fisher for men, one must realize the lost condition of people out of Christ. One will not become very interested in leading men to Christ until he realizes that people are lost and what a terrible thing it is to be lost. The more keenly we realize these things, the more energetically we will work to bring men to Christ. But not only

that, one must realize the value of souls. A person who does not think souls are valuable will not work very hard to save them, but the greater valuation one places on a soul the harder one will work to save those souls. And furthermore, one should realize that time is swiftly passing, and that souls are passing into eternity. One who realizes the terrible condition of a lost soul, that a soul is worth the blood of the sinless Son of God, and is impressed with the fact that time is swiftly passing and souls are going into eternity unprepared and must spend eternity in hell with the devil and his angels, that one may become a fisher of men. (b) One must love people. It is difficult for us to do things for people whom we do not love. And especially is it difficult for us to do things which cost us time and effort and energy if we do not love those people. The more we love people, the easier it is to serve them. And so the individual who does not love people will find it difficult to do the things that are necessary to bring them to Christ. Furthermore, it is next to impossible to influence people whom we do not love. People sense our attitude toward them, and if they realize that we do not love them, that the things we are saying and doing are done mechanically just to save our own souls, they will resent our attention. But if we can convince them that we are really, genuinely interested in them and are interested in their welfare, we can influence them for good, (c) Desire to serve Christ. Not only must one love people, but one must have a genuine desire to serve Christ. The more we love Christ, and the more keenly we feel our debt to Christ for what he has done for us, the more we will desire to serve him. Hence, we ought to think upon these things and cultivate a genuine, impelling desire to serve Christ.

3. Need for fishers of men. (a) In local areas. There is a great need for fishers of men even in our own local areas. So many people are lost; so many people are not interested in their soul's welfare. Undoubtedly there are many in your own community who have no church relationship at all, and consequently are, according to their own estimation, lost. Then there are those who have

church relationships, but they are in religious error and consequently are lost. All these afford us opportunities to fish for men. (b) There are great portions of the United States where the gospel is not preached in its purity. These portions afford us unlimited opportunities for fishing for men. We need, many of us, to go into these areas. All of us need to be interested in sending fishers into these areas

that we may attract men to Christ, (c) In foreign missions. We have more missionaries in foreign nations than at any other time in the last hundred years, but in spite of that we are pitifully weak in all of these nations, and in many of them there is not a single person who is preaching the gospel in its purity. All these great areas emphasize the need for heeding the call of Jesus to come and let him make fishers of men.

## Introduction

The contact which Jesus had with Peter on the occasion of our lesson is not the first contact he had had with this impetuous man. The first contact that we know about is found in John 1: 35ff. There we find John the Baptist pointing to Jesus as the lamb of God, and some of John's disciples followed Jesus. Among them was Andrew who went and found his brother Simon and brought him to Jesus. Then the next day, Jesus contacted two more, Philip and Nathan-

ael. His first miracle in Cana (John 2: 1-11), and his first cleansing of the temple (John 2: 13-25), as well as his conversation with Nicodemus (John 3: 1-21), and his conversation with the woman of Samaria (John 4: 5ff.), all preceded the incident of our lesson today. Following his conversation with the Samaritan woman, he went into Galilee and established his residence in Capernaum. (Matt. 4: 13.)

## Exposition of the Text

I. Jesus Contacts Peter (Luke 5: 1-3)

*The multitude pressed upon him.* This is in the period of the popularity of Jesus. He was popular with the common people, and it was in this section of Galilee which was inhabited by a poorer class of people and people who were not so prejudiced as the leaders of Judaism in and around Jerusalem. It was in this area that most of his miracles were performed; it was in this area that nearly all of his apostles were selected; and it was in this area that the Sermon on the Mount was delivered. It was at Jerusalem that his great discourses and his scathing rebukes of the scribes, the Pharisees, and the chief priests were delivered. It is interesting to note also that these great multitudes pressed upon Jesus to hear the word of God. On some occasions multitudes followed him for the loaves and fishes, but here they were interested in the word of God. Jesus did not teach as the scribes and Pharisees, but spoke as one having authority. This was a fresh and different approach, and the people were hungry for just that type of teaching.

*He was standing by the lake of*

*Gennesaret.* This place is known by several names in the Bible. In John 6: 1 it is called Tiberius; in Matt. 4: 18 it is called Galilee; in Num. 34: 11 it is called Chennereth. We are told that the word Gennesaret is a reproduction of the old Hebrew name Chennereth. This lake is said to be in somewhat the shape of a pear, and is six miles wide at its widest part and twelve and a half miles long. The greatest depth is 165 feet, and the level of the sea is 682 feet below that of the Mediterranean Sea. (McGarvey.)

*He entered into one of the boats.* As Jesus approached the sea, he saw two ships, and one of them belonged to Simon Peter. Josephus said that in his day there were two hundred and thirty such boats on the lake, and that each one was attended by four or five men. But when Brother McGarvey visited there, he says there were only three such boats on the entire lake, and that they found only partial employment in supplying Tiberius, the only city standing in McGarvey's day, with the required amount of fish. From the tone of our text, one would think that Jesus was already acquainted with Peter, and we have found such to be the case

since his first contact was recorded in the scripture cited above. Jesus asked that Simon put his boat out from the land. This was necessary in order that Jesus could be free from the press of the multitude while he spoke to them. Any time Jesus found a multitude of people together, he considered it an opportunity to teach them. It was such an opportunity when he delivered the Sermon on the Mount, and he also had such an opportunity on two occasions when he fed the multitude. If we were as diligent to use the opportunities we have for teaching people as Jesus was, we would spend much more time teaching others, and we would convert a lot more people than we do.

## II. Jesus Directs Peter (Luke 5: 4-7)

*Put out into the deep.* This verse has served as a text for many sermons to encourage people to renewed and greater efforts. Though this thought is not originally in the mind of Jesus, yet these words can be used to suggest greater activities on the part of people. We ought to expect great things of the Lord. Those who expect little usually do but little, and consequently accomplish but little if anything at all. But those who expect great things usually put forth great effort, and the Lord is always ready and able to bless with great results. Launching out into the deep and making another effort was a test of Peter's faith, and so launching out into bigger programs of work and worship is a test of our faith today.

*Master, we toiled all night, and took nothing.* This is the first time the word Master is used to refer to Jesus. The other writers use the words Rabbi and Lord, but since Luke was writing for Gentile readers, the Holy Spirit would direct him to use a word which would be understood by them. Peter's words indicate the utter hopelessness of depending upon human wisdom and strength. They had toiled all night, using their best knowledge of the lake and of the tactics of fishermen, and in spite of their very best efforts, they had failed to take anything. However, they had been fishing without the direction that Jesus could give them.

*At thy word I will let down the nets.* This statement indicates some

degree of respect for their visitor, if not faith in him. Jesus is not a total stranger to these men, as we have seen above. So Peter indicates a degree of confidence in his word. The direction which Jesus gave Peter was contrary to Peter's knowledge of the situation. By his continued efforts through the night, Peter had reached the conclusion that there were no fish in that portion of the lake to be taken. But yet in spite of his conviction on the matter, he is willing to obey the direction which Jesus gave him. This indicates a degree of faith and of willingness to obey the word of the Lord which should characterize all of the Lord's servants today. The thing which the Lord directs may not be in harmony with the so-called findings of science or the principles of philosophy put forth by the best philosophers, yet the very fact he has given his word is sufficient for those who have faith in the Lord. Another practical lesson may be learned from this text, and that is acting on the basis of the word of the Lord and not on our own desires or our own human inclinations. As authority for every act in our work and worship, we should be able to point to the word of the Lord. That which we do should be done because of his direction and not because some other religious group is doing it, or because it seems to be dictated by convenience or by human wisdom.

*They inclosed a great multitude of fishes.* The first lesson to be gained from this is the superhuman knowledge of Jesus. How did Jesus know there were fish in that portion of the lake at that time? Peter and his associates had fished there before and caught nothing. Now they catch more than their boat can hold. No ordinary human being could have known where and when to cast the nets for such results; Jesus was more than a human being. The next lesson suggested by this is the abundant blessing which the Lord can and is anxious to give those who obey him in faith. When we launch out on greater programs of worship and service to the Lord today, we may rest assured that he is able to see us through and make us able to accomplish more than we had ever hoped we could accomplish. And we will accomplish these things not through our own wisdom or strength, but

through faith in him who is able to accomplish great things. A third lesson worthy of mention is that Jesus had asked a favor of these fishermen in lending him their boat as a pulpit from which to preach to the great multitude standing on the shore. To repay them for this favor, he blesses them with a great catch of fish. We never do anything for the Lord but that he abundantly rewards us for the service.

m. Jesus Amazes Peter (Luke 5: 8-11)

*Depart from me; for I am a sinful man.* Several things are suggested by this request. First, the humility of Peter is suggested. Peter did not want Jesus to leave him because of any dislike for the Lord, but rather because Peter felt that he was not worthy to be in the presence of such a being. Next, Peter's faith in Jesus is manifested in this statement. He believed Jesus to be more than a human being. Whether he believed in him as the Christ, the son of God, at this time we cannot be sure. But certainly he recognized the super-human knowledge and power of Jesus, and prostrating himself at the feet of Jesus, he manifested not only his humility but his faith in Jesus as one worthy of this honor. The next thought is that this statement shows the ignorance of Peter. We make this statement with some reservation, and yet the statement is true from one point of view. Peter did not know then, as he later realized, that near the Lord was a good place for a sinful man to be. After Jesus had died and had been raised from the dead, he appeared to these same disciples with others at about the same place, and when Peter recognized that Jesus was on the shore, he threw himself into the water and swam and waded to the presence of Jesus. Three and a half years before, at the time of our lesson, Peter asked the Lord to leave him because of his sinfulness; but now, having come to know Jesus better and having learned by bitter experience the night he betrayed the Lord, that near the Lord was a good place to be, he was anxious to avail himself of the blessings to be gained in the presence of the Lord. If all of us could learn that near the Lord is a good place to be in time of trial and of adversity as well as in times of joy and pros-

perity, we would have gained a most valuable lesson. Another lesson suggested in this text is the love and goodness of Jesus. Jesus came into this world to bless just such men as Peter. And in the wisdom of God it was best that Jesus come into the presence of these sinful men that he might bless them. If Jesus had withdrawn from them on account of their sins, as Peter suggested, he could never have redeemed man. And so we can appreciate the goodness and the love of Jesus that brought him from heaven and brought him into the presence and the association of sinful men that he might teach them, lift them up, give them an example by which to live, and finally to die for them that he might take them home with him to spend eternity in heaven.

*Who were partners with Simon.* Here it is said that James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were partners in the fishing business with Peter. There was another partner in this business, and that was Peter's brother, Andrew. Both Matthew and Mark mention Andrew as a partner with Simon in this business.

*From henceforth thou shalt catch men.* In all probability Peter, Andrew, James, and John did not understand the full import of these words. Yet, they could very well have understood them sufficiently to be impressed with these lessons: (a) That they were being called to move at the word of the Lord. As Peter agreed to launch out into the deep because the Lord directed him to do so, they would now be moving at the word of the Lord to accomplish other purposes, (b) That they were to put their trust in the Lord for success. They had toiled all night by themselves without success, but with the help of Jesus they did in a few minutes what they were not able to accomplish all night by themselves. So, if they would put their trust in the Lord in this new calling, they would have success, (c) That they might expect great success. Surely the unusual catch of fishes was intended by the Lord to suggest to these men something of the degree of success they could expect in their new calling, (d) As men are more valuable than fish, so their activity in their new calling was more honorable, involved far greater re-

sponsibility, and would be followed by greater rewards.

*They left all, and followed him.* These men left their business and gave up their means of earning a living and followed Jesus. (Mark 10: 28.) Jesus does not require that every individual give up all his property, convert it into money, and give it away in order to be his followers, but many men in apostolic times and in the centuries following have done that very thing. It seems

that Luke the physician left his business to accompany Paul, render what service he could to the great apostle, and serve the Lord as best he could. Would we be willing to make such sacrifice today? Perhaps our faith in the Lord, our trust in his ability to care for us, our love for lost souls, and our zeal for the spread of the kingdom of God on earth are measured by our willingness to leave some of the worldly possessions and follow the Lord.

### Lessons to Learn

1. Paul said not many mighty are called, not many rich and powerful and influential in the affairs of this world are chosen. And so Jesus, as he went about selecting men to be his apostles, did not go to the rich and powerful, to the great school of Gamaliel, or to scribes in the service of the high priest, but he went among the fishermen, the tax collectors, the poor, and the unimportant from a worldly point of view.

2. Men spend great sums of money and much time and energy in religious exercise and accomplish little or nothing. They need to cease following their own wisdom and depending upon human schemes to

catch the interest of men and to free them from the power and dominion of sin. They need to move at the word of the Lord and let that word direct them in all the activities which they expect to be successful and please the Lord in their religious exercises.

3. Are you fishing for men? Does this apply to apostles only? No, this lesson applies to us all. Every Christian is to be a fisher of men. And if we are not interested in the salvation of souls and do not love the Lord enough to make an effort to catch men for the Lord, we have no hope of being saved eternally.

### 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 the first step to be taken in following Christ to become fishers of men? Can you prove that the birth of water and the spirit admits one into the church? What must the church member do to become an effective fisher for men? Suggest some details in following the example of the life of Christ.

Why will a clear conception of what it means to be lost help us to be a fisher of men?

Why must one love people in order to be a good fisher of men?

Why is the desire to serve Christ essential to effective winning of souls?

What do you know of the need for fishers of men?

What is this church doing to train men and women to become fishers of men?

**Introduction**  
Does our lesson text tell of the first meeting of Jesus and Peter?

Relate the circumstances of the first meeting of Jesus and Peter.

Name some incidents that occurred between these two meetings of Jesus and Peter.

**Jesus Contacts Peter**  
In what section of the Holy Land did the events of our lesson occur?

Name other outstanding events in the life of Jesus which occurred in this section. What is given as the reason why the multitude followed Jesus at this time?

Can you give three other names for the Sea of Galilee?

What do you know of its size, depth, and elevation?

Can you contrast ancient business conditions on Galilee with those of modern times?

For what did Jesus use Peter's boat?

**Jesus Directs Peter**  
How did Jesus try Peter's faith on this occasion?

How did Peter show an unusual faith in Jesus?

How do we manifest our faith in Jesus? What does this incident teach us concerning the knowledge of Jesus?

What do we learn from this incident about the Lord's ability and willingness to bless his people?

**Jesus Amazes Peter**  
What request did Peter make of Jesus?

How did Peter show his humility, his faith in Jesus, and his ignorance as to the best place for a sinner to be?

Relate the experience Peter had with Jesus about this same place three years later and draw lessons from that experience.

Who were partners with Peter in the fishing business?

State and discuss four lessons which Peter and his partners could get from the call to become fishers of men. What did Peter and his partners give up to become fishers of men?

Are our faith and love for lost souls measured by the degree of our sacrifices? What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson II—October 14, 1956

PETER, SERVANT, APOSTLE AND ELDER

Lesson Text

1 And he called unto him twelve disciples, and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of disease and all manner of sickness.

2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Si'-mon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the *SON* of Zeb-e-dee, and John his brother,

3 Philip, and Bar-thol'-o-mew; Thomas, and Mat'-thew the publican; James the *SON* of Al-phae'-us, and Thad-dae'-us;

4 Si'-mon the Ca-na-nae'-an, and Ju'-das Is-car'-i-ot, who also betrayed him.

1 The elders therefore among you

5: ekh'hor'2, Pe'h'ol'and a fellow-elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

2 Tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly, according to *the will of God*; nor yet for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

3 Neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock.

1 Si'-mon Peter, a servant and apostle of Je'-sus Christ, to them that have obtained a like precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God and *the* Saviour Je'-sus Christ:

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"We were eyewitnesses of his majesty."* (2 Pet. 1: 16b.)  
DEVOTIONAL READING.—Matt. 10: 5-15.

Daily Bible Readings

- October 8. M. . . . . An Unfaithful Servant (Luke 12: 41-47)
- October 9. T. . . . . End of Unfaithful Servants (Matt. 25: 14-46)
- October 10. W. . . . . Servants of God (1 Pet. 2: 13-15)
- October 11. T. . . . . Peter's Call to the Apostleship (Luke 6: 12-19)
- October 12. F. . . . . Peter Chosen to Speak to Gentiles (Acts 15: 7-11)
- October 13. S. . . . . Qualifications of Elders (1 Tim. 3: 1-7; Tit. 1: 5-9)
- October 14. S. . . . . Elders in Every Church (Acts 14: 19-28)

TIME.—The event recorded by Matthew, A.D. 27; time for writing of Peter's epistles, A.D. 60-64.

PLACES.—For Matthew, in Galilee near Capernaum; for Peter, Babylon.  
PERSONS.—Jesus and his apostles.

Golden Text Explained

1. The majesty of Christ, (a) The meaning of majesty. Peter says that he was an eyewitness of the majesty of Christ. What did Peter see which he described as the majesty of Christ? This word for majesty occurs only three times in the New Testament. It occurs here in our text, and again in Luke 9: 43, where it is used with reference to the power of God as manifested in the miracles of Christ. The third occurrence of the word is in Acts 19: 27, where it is translated

magnificence and refers to the attitude of the Ephesians toward their goddess Diana. In all three of these occurrences it refers to something superhuman, something in the realm of the divine, (b) Manifested in the transfiguration. The majesty to which Peter refers was manifested by our Lord when he was transfigured before them. From the gospel records we learn that Jesus took Peter, James, and John up on a mountain and was transfigured before them. His face

shone brightly, and his clothes became whiter than any tailor could possibly make them. The glory of Jesus shone through his clothing and in his countenance in such a way as to impress the witnesses with his superhuman nature and power. (Matt. 17: 1-8, Luke 9: 28-36.) (c) The meaning of this display of majesty. There are several lessons to be gained from the transfiguration, but perhaps the most outstanding lesson is that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. His Father spoke from heaven and called Jesus his Son. Evidently, this is one reason for the display of majesty that these witnesses might believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Second, that Jesus was to displace Moses and Elijah as the lawgiver and the prophet for God.

2. Testimony to his majesty, (a) Sufficient in number. The law required that every word or deed should be established at the mouth of two or three witnesses. Jesus took Peter, James, and John with him up to the mountain to behold his majesty. Hence, we have a sufficient number to establish the fact of the transfiguration. (b) The men were qualified to testify. There has been some discussion as to whether the men were awake or asleep during the events which are said to have transpired. However, Luke clears the matter up. After saying that they had been heavy with sleep, we read, "But when they were fully awake, they saw his glory." (Luke 9: 32.) The words "but when they were fully awake" are the translation of one Greek word which is an aorist participle and literally translated is "and having awoke fully." (The Englishman's Greek New Testament, Samuel Bagster.) In further proof that these men were qualified, it may be said that they had been with Jesus for several months. They knew him intimately; they knew they went into the mountain with him; they knew that he was the person that was

transfigured. They saw him following the events of this lesson and knew that he was the same one they saw transfigured on the mount. They could not possibly have been mistaken as to the identity of the man transfigured, nor could they have been deceived with reference to the things which happened to them on that occasion. (c) they saw and heard. There is no better testimony that that of an eyewitness. But they not only saw Jesus transfigured, they heard Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah, and they heard the voice from out of heaven declaring this one to be his Son.

3. Basic facts of Christianity proven, (a) Miracles. Certainly we would expect the friends of Jesus to give testimony as to occurrence of his miracles, but not only his friends gave testimony but his enemies gave testimony. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, the Jews said, "What do we? for this man doeth many signs. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." (John 11: 47, 48.) Then again when Jesus was in the home of Lazarus being entertained, the common people heard about his presence and came to see him. And the Jews "took counsel that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus." (John 12: 10.) (b) The resurrection. The resurrection is attested by more than five hundred eye witnesses, including the twelve apostles who were intimately associated with him for more than three years. (1 Cor. 15: 1-7.) No fact in history is attested by better or more unassailable proof than the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The man who rejects the resurrection of Christ as a historical fact can be driven to deny the occurrence of any historic event.

### Introduction

The terms in our lesson topic are the terms which Peter used to describe his relationship with the Lord and to his brethren. At no time did Peter use any term that would exalt him in any degree above any of his brethren. He never conceived of

himself as being Pope, and never used any term that would indicate that he felt that his brethren ought to give him any such honor. Paul said that he was "not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles." (2 Cor. 11: 5; 12: 11.) It should be noticed

that Paul did not say that he was not a whit behind the chiefest apostle (singular), but the chiefest apostles (plural). He did not single out one

as the chiefest apostle, which he certainly would have done if the apostle Peter had been recognized as the Pope among them.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Peter and Others Named Apostles (Matt. 10: 1-4)

*He called unto him his twelve disciples.* Here the apostles are referred to as disciples. Their appointment to be apostles preceded the events of this lesson by several months. Luke says that after our Lord had gone into a mountain and spent the entire night in prayer to his Father, "when it was day, he called his disciples; and he chose from them twelve, whom also he named apostles." (Luke 6: 12, 13.) Matthew seems to have no concern for the chronology of these events, but rather is emphasizing the fact that Jesus is sending men to help teach the multitudes. In the preceding chapter, Matthew tells us that Jesus went through the cities and villages preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing all manner of disease, and when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion because they were distressed and scattered as sheep not having a shepherd. And in view of this great need, Jesus called his twelve apostles and gave them authority to do the work which was needed.

*Gave them authority over unclean spirits.* From this we learn first that the existence of unclean or evil spirits is recognized by our Lord. There are those who deny the existence of evil spirits, claiming that people of that day thought people were possessed by evil spirits when they were suffering from some mental or physical disease. But Jesus distinguishes between evil spirits and disease. He not only gave them authority to cast out the evil spirits, but he also gave them power to heal those who were afflicted with diseases, either mental or physical.

*To heal all manner of disease . . . sickness.* The word for disease is a rather common term, and is used in its various forms by all four of the biographers of Jesus. But the word for sickness is used only by Matthew, and he uses it but three times. (Matt. 4: 23; 9: 35; 10: 1.) The word for disease simply means what our English word disease means, but the

word for sickness refers to some bodily weakness, debility, or infirmity. These apostles were to use this authority over disease and sickness for the purpose of proving the truth of their message and causing people to have faith in Jesus who sent them. The fact that apostles could not use this power at all times is an indication of the fact it was given them for special purpose. Paul left Trophimus at Miletus sick when he needed Trophimus as a helper. (2 Tim. 4: 20.) And Epaphroditus had a very serious illness while in Rome, and caused Paul and the saints at Philippi no little concern for his welfare. (Phil. 2: 27-30.) If Paul had the power to heal diseases, why did he not heal Epaphroditus and save himself and the church at Philippi all that anxiety? The truth is that there was no occasion to confirm the word preached either in the case of Trophimus or Epaphroditus; hence, Paul did not use his power to heal. It follows that, since the word has been confirmed and recorded, there is no longer any need for miracles to confirm the truth of that word. And men who claim to have the power to heal today do not claim that they work such miracles to confirm the truth of God. They claim to heal in order to relieve people of suffering. They are claiming to use miraculous power for a purpose for which the apostles refused to use it.

*The first, Simon, who is called Peter.* This apostle is known by four names. The first two, Simon and Peter, are Greek terms, but the word Simeon (Acts 15: 14) is Hebrew. Then the word Cephas is Syro-Chaldaic, meaning the same as the word Peter. The word *first* as used in our text may either refer to the order in which these apostles are called or are to be named here, or it may refer to his prominence among the apostles. We may admit his prominence among them without admitting that he was Pope.

II. Peter Exhorts his Fellow-Elders (1 Pet. 5: 1-3)

*The elders therefore among you 1*

*exhort.* The word *elder* primarily refers to an old man, but it also is used in an official sense in the New Testament. Men became elders by appointment. (Acts 14: 23.) We do not become aged men by appointment. We know that the word is used here in its official sense because Peter speaks of these elders exercising the oversight of the congregation. Not all old men are fit or expected to exercise such oversight. Furthermore, Peter speaks of them as having a charge allotted to them. Not all old men in the church have such a charge allotted to them.

*Who am also a fellow-elder.* Peter speaks of himself as an elder in the church and is therefore a fellow-elder with those in the churches of Asia Minor to whom he is writing. He does not speak of himself as being above these other elders in rank or authority. No one can conceive of the Pope in Rome as addressing common officers in the various congregations as his fellow-elders, or even as fellow-priests.

*A witness of the sufferings of Christ.* Not only was Peter a witness of the sufferings of Christ at the hands of the Jews throughout his life, but he was a witness of the crucifixion of Christ to which this statement evidently refers. We are not told in either of the gospel records that Peter was present at the crucifixion, but we are told that "all his acquaintance, and the women that followed with them from Galilee, stood afar off, seeing these things." (Luke 23: 49.) This term, "all his acquaintance," would certainly include Peter, and the genuineness of Peter's repentance after his denial would guarantee his presence at the crucifixion.

*Also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.* Peter speaks of himself as not only a witness of the sufferings of Christ, but a partaker of the glory that is yet to be revealed. Peter also speaks of this as being reserved in heaven, an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fades not away. (1 Pet. 1: 3, 4.) This glory refers to his glorious appearing (Tit. 2: 13), his glorious triumph over Satan and death in the resurrection, and the glorious inheritance reserved for those who are faithful to the Lord.

*Tend the flock of God which is*

*among you.* The word "tend" carries with it the idea not only of feeding, but of caring for the flock. So it was the duty of the elders both to feed the flock the truth and to guard them from error. (Tit. 1: 9-11.)

*Exercising the oversight.* Our words "exercising the oversight" are the translation of one Greek word which is the word from which we get our term bishop. So this might well be translated "doing the work of a bishop." The elders whom Peter addressed were to do the work of bishops; they were to be overseers; they were to superintend the work of the church. Not all old men are to accept this responsibility, hence Peter is using the term elder in its official sense. He further says that they are not to do this work by reason of its being forced upon them, but they are to do it willingly. Paul speaks of men's desiring the office of a bishop. (1 Tim. 3: 1.) He also says that they are not to do this work for the sake of filthy lucre. This would imply that elders were paid for their services, but Peter admonishes them not to do the work simply or primarily because of the remuneration received, but to do the work willingly and because of the good they could do their fellow men, and because it would give opportunity to honor and glorify God.

*Neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you.* Peter warned the elders lest they should take undue authority over the flock and should abuse the authority which the Lord gave them. As bishops or overseers, it would be necessary for them to give directions, to exercise some degree of authority, but God never gave man any authority in any relationship without putting a check on that authority. God gave man to be the head of the family, but he put a check on the authority man may exercise by saying that, if he abused his privileges and mistreated his family, God would not hear his prayers. (1 Pet. 3: 7b.)

*Making yourselves ensamples to the flock.* These elders were to exercise their oversight not so much by the exertion of their authority, but by making themselves examples before the people. Some brethren have taken this statement to mean that elders have no authority except that which can be exercised through an

example. We have a construction here which is common in the New Testament where the negative precedes a positive with the intention of minimizing the importance of the negative and magnifying the importance of the positive. As an example, we have, "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." (Acts 5: 4b.) Again, "Therefore he that rejecteth, rejecteth not man, but God." (1 Thess. 4: 8a.) Peter did not mean to say that Ananais had not lied unto men, but he is emphasizing that Ananais lied unto God. Nor does Paul intend to say that the man who disobeys God has not rejected man at all, but he is emphasizing the fact that he has rejected God. So in this statement Peter does not intend to say that elders shall not rule or exercise authority over the flock, but he intends to emphasize the fact that they shall be examples to the flock. III. Peter, the Servant of Christ (2 Pet. 1: 1)

*Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ.* The word Simon, or Simeon, means *hearing*, and it is the name given by his parents. The name Peter was given by Jesus Christ on the occasion of his first conversation with Peter. (John 1: 42.) The word Peter means "a stone" and refers not so much to what Peter was when Jesus called him as to what he would be through the influence of the teaching and association of Jesus upon him and what he would become through a life of service to the Lord. And so we find Peter standing as a rock for the defense of the gospel and for the divinity of Christ in spite of the sufferings to which he was compelled

to submit. We notice the humility of these terms used by Peter. He was a servant, a slave, of Jesus Christ, and he was an apostle, one sent by Jesus Christ on a mission which he was to perform. There are no high-sounding titles in this letter, nor are there any terms which denotes rank and authority and importance.

*To them that have obtained a like precious faith.* The fact that Peter speaks of this as his second letter to these people (2 Pet. 3: 1) is proof that he is writing again to the people of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. (1 Pet. 1: 1.) Peter says that these people have obtained a like precious faith with us, meaning perhaps the apostles or the Jews. Some take the position that the word "us" refers to Jews since the churches of Asia Minor were largely composed of Gentiles. The word "faith" in this verse "is not subjective; it does not refer to belief; it is objective, being synonymous with *the gospel*." It is used here in the same sense as in Gal. 1: 23, where it is said that Paul preached 'the faith' he once destroyed. This conclusion follows from the fact that the verb 'obtained' denotes that which is received by lot, by fortune, by divine appointment, and not with any exertion or merit." (Woods.)

*In the righteousness of our God.* The word "righteousness" here refers to an attribute of God. These people had obtained this precious faith in or through God's righteous deeds. God is no respecter of persons, and he had granted this faith to the Gentiles of Asia Minor, even as he had granted it to the Jew and to the apostles themselves.

### Lessons to Learn

1. Peter shows his faith in Jesus by leaving his business, his source of income, to follow Jesus, with the belief that the Lord would provide the necessities of this life. In this he becomes an example to us to consider ourselves as obligated to sacrifice things for the Lord and to trust in the Lord for the provision for this life.

2. Peter paid a great price to be a witness of the sufferings of Christ. He not only left his business and suffered the poverty and the privations attendant upon the preaching

of the gospel in those days, but he was persecuted even unto death. Tradition tells us that, when it came his time to die, he insisted that he be crucified head down because he was not worthy to die like his Lord.

3. Peter lived as a servant—slave—of Christ. He and all he had belonged to Christ. He used all his time and talent in his service to Christ. As a slave owns nothing and has no right to determine how he uses his time and ability, so Peter served the Lord as the Lord's slave.

## Questions for the Class

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

### Golden Text Explained

What is the meaning of the word *majesty* in our text?

Show the use of the word in its three occurrences in the New Testament.

Describe the conditions under which Peter saw the majesty of Jesus.

What is the meaning of the transfiguration?

Can you show that there is sufficient evidence to obligate us to believe the story of the transfiguration?

How did the enemies of Jesus give testimony to his power to work miracles?

How many witnesses are cited to prove the resurrection of Jesus?

### Introduction

What terms did Peter use to describe his relationship with the Lord and with his brethren?

How does Paul contribute proof to the fact that Peter was on a level with other apostles?

### Peter and Others Named Apostles

How did Jesus spend the night prior to the appointment of his apostles?

To meet what present need was this appointment made?

What authority was given the apostles at the time of their appointment?

What is suggested in this statement with reference to the reality of demons?

What is the difference between disease and sickness as these words are used in the text?

can you tell why Peter did not use his power to heal his fellow-workers?

Can you prove that people do not have that healing power today?

By what three other names was Peter known?

### Peter Exhorts his Fellow-Elders

What is the primary meaning of the word *elder*?

Does it also have an official connotation?

What evidence do we have that Peter witnessed the crucifixion of Christ?

What is meant by the glory that shall be revealed, and who are to be partakers thereof?

What duty does Peter lay upon his fellow-elders?

What is meant by exercising the oversight?

Against what mistakes does Peter caution his fellow-elders?

Can you show how Peter emphasized the necessity for elders to set an example

before the flock?

### Peter, the Servant of Christ

Who gave him the name Simon?

What is the meaning of the word?

Who gave him the name Peter?

What is the meaning of that name?

To whom did Peter write this epistle?

Were they Jews or Gentiles?

What is the meaning of the word *faith* in this verse?

What is the meaning of the word *righteousness* in this verse?

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

## Lesson III—October 21, 1956

# PETER AND THE TRANSFIGURATION

## Lesson Text

Matt. 17: 1-8; 2 Pet. 1: 16-18

1 And after six days Je'-sus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart:

2 And he was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as the lights

3 And behold, there appeared unto them Mo'-ses and E'-li'-jah talking with him.

4 And Peter answered, and said unto Je'-sus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, I will make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Mo'-ses, and one for E'-li'-jah.

5 While he was yet speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

6 And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.

7 And Je'-sus came and touched them and said, Arise, and be not afraid.

8 And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one, save Je'-sus only.

16 For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Je'-sus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

17 For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there was borne such a voice to him by the Majestic Glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased:

18 And this voice we ourselves heard borne out of heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."* (Matt. 17: 5.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Matt. 17: 9-13.

### Daily Bible Readings

- October 15. M. . . . . Mark's Account of the Transfiguration (Mark 9: 1-8)
- October 16. T. . . . . Elijah the Great Prophet (2 Kings 2: 1-11)
- October 17. W. . . . . Moses the Great Lawgiver (Deut. 34: 1-12)
- October 18. T. . . . . The Father Acknowledges His Son (Matt. 3: 13-17)
- October 19. F. . . . . Elijah of the New Testament John the Baptist (Matt. 17: 9-13)
- October 20. S. . . . . Peter Asleep (Luke 9: 28-32)
- October 21. S. . . . . Peter's Request (Luke 9: 33-36)

TIME.—For Matthew, A.D. 28; for Second Peter, A.D. 60-64.

PLACES.—For Matthew, a mountain in Galilee, perhaps Hermon; for Second Peter, Babylon.

PERSONS.—Jesus, Peter, James, and John.

### Golden Text Explained

1. Jesus owned by the Father, (a) By word of mouth. At time of his baptism, the Father spoke from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. 3: 17.) And in connection with the transfiguration we have this same statement which serves as our text at this time, (b) By miracles. The apostle Peter said in accusing the Jews of crucifying Jesus, "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know." (Acts 2: 22.) Again, after Jesus had recognized the witness which John gave concerning him, he said, "But the witness which I have is greater than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to accomplish, the very works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." (John 5: 36.) From this we see that Jesus regarded the miracles which he was able to work in the name of his Father as a proof of his sonship. Again, Jesus contends, "The works that I do in my Father's name, these bear witness of me. . . . If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do them, though ye believe the works: that ye may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I am in the Father." (John 10: 25, 37, 38.) Nicodemus said that no man could do such works as Jesus did unless God was with him. (John 3: 2.) Since then the Father empowered the Son to do such works, these miracles are proof that the Father owned and accepted Jesus as

his Son as he claimed to be. (c) By the resurrection. The apostle Paul said that Jesus "was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." (Rom. 1: 4.) Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, and for this claim the Jews put him to death for blasphemy. God raised him from the dead and so put his stamp of approval upon all that Jesus said and did. This is equal to owning Jesus as his Son according to the claim which Jesus made.

2. Jesus pleased the Father, (a) By coming in the body. When the Father was no longer pleased with sacrifices and offerings, a body was prepared for the Son who came to do the will of God. (Heb. 10: 5-10.) (b) In his obedience. When Jesus obeyed the demands of the Father that the Jews be baptized, and Jesus did that according to his words "to fulfil all righteousness," the Father broke his silence from heaven and said that he was well pleased. Surely we cannot divorce this act of obedience from the statement which the Father made about being pleased with the Son. In another place Jesus said it was his meat to do the will of the Father and to please him who had sent him. (John 4: 34.) (c) In his atoning death. Since the Father was so intensely interested in the salvation of souls as to give his only begotten Son to die that salvation might be possible, we certainly conclude that the Father was pleased with the suffering of his Son in order to make salvation possible. But the

apostle Paul tells us that after Jesus had emptied himself and had taken the form of a servant and humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death of the cross, "God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name that is above every name," (Phil. 2: 6-11.) This indicates that the Father exalted the Son because of the service he rendered in his death on Calvary. This is an indication that the Father was pleased with the service which he rendered.

3. Jesus is to be heard, (a) Moses and Elijah no longer have authority. When Jesus was transfigured before his three disciples, he talked with Moses and Elijah. Then God took Moses and Elijah away, and uttered the words of our text. This indicates that Moses and Elijah no longer have any authority, that the law and the prophets are no longer binding upon the people, but instead of hear-

ing the law and the prophets they are to hear his Son Jesus Christ, (b) Jesus has all authority. You remember that Jesus after coming from the grave said, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." (Matt. 28: 18, 19.) If Jesus has all authority, certainly we are obligated to hear him in all that he says. (c) Consequence of refusing to hear. The individual who rejects the words of Jesus as revealed through the apostles not only rejects Jesus but rejects the Father that sent him. (Luke 10: 16.) And Peter says that Jesus is that prophet whom God promised to raise up from among the people, like unto Moses, whom the people should hear in all things, and the consequence of refusing to hear would be that they should be utterly destroyed from among the people. (Acts 3: 22, 23.)

### Introduction

For a long time scholars believed that the transfiguration took place on Mount Tabor, but since there was a military garrison on Mount Tabor, and for other reasons, this position has been abandoned, and Mount Hermon is now regarded as a more likely spot for the scene of the transfiguration. Brother McGarvey, on his trip to the Holy Land, visited Mount Hermon and climbed to its summit. He said that "if the apostle Peter, looking back many years after that glorious vision, could style its locality 'the holy mount,' the modern pilgrims to the Holy Land may be excused for regarding it with veneration." The summit of Mount Hermon is about 9,200 feet above sea level. "Mount Hermon is not a rocky mountain, although some very bold and

majestic masses of naked rock are seen at intervals; but its surface is composed chiefly of smooth slopes covered with soil, and in the spring it is clothed with verdure. Even as late as June 19, the date of our ascent, the melting masses of snow supply sufficient moisture to keep alive a considerable amount of vegetation, and the shepherds, in search of green pasture, lead their flocks of goats to its very summit. Here they watch over the flocks by night as well as by day, and their food is brought to them from the distant villages below." He says that the snow was practically all gone at the time he was there, but that through many summers great amounts of snow are seen to the very end of the summer.

### Exposition of the Text

I. Peter Witnesses the Transfiguration (Matt. 17: 1-8)

*After six days.* This reference to time is in connection with the conversation which Jesus had with his apostles when Peter confessed him as the Christ the Son of the living God. (Matt. 16: 15-19.) This event was said to take place in the part of Caesarea Philippi, and it was not too far from there to the scene of the transfiguration, not sufficient time to require six days. So Jesus and his apostles had some time between

the confession of Peter and the transfiguration of Jesus for rest and study. It might be of interest that Luke says that it was after about eight days instead of six mentioned by Matthew. (Luke 9: 28.) But Luke counts the day on which the confession of Peter took place and the day on which the transfiguration of Jesus occurred, but Matthew simply counts the days between the two appearances. Hence, no difficulty. It will be noted that Jesus took only three who composed an inner circle

of the apostles, Peter, James, and John, up into the mountains. He often took these three to witness unusual miracles. (Luke 8: 51.)

*And he was transfigured before them.* The word for transfigured simply means to change to another form or to change one's appearance. Luke avoids the use of this word and says, "the fashion of his countenance was altered." (Luke 9: 29.) The same word is used with reference to Christians being transformed. (Rom. 12: 2.) It is also used with reference to our change by growth into the likeness of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 3: 18.) So Jesus was not changed from a human to a spirit being. He still had a face which they could see, and he wore clothes that they could feel.

*His face did shine as the sun.* The scripture nowhere tells us the cause of the face of Jesus shining as brightly as the sun, nor why his garments became as white as the light. Hence, it is needless to speculate. Some think that his divinity was allowed to shine through the human body so as to give a foretaste of what will be in heaven. Barnes objects to this as being without foundation, but he does not venture a better or more reasonable explanation. One commentator suggests that it is more a miracle that the divinity of Jesus did not continually shine through the tabernacle of flesh than that it was a miracle that for a time his divinity did shine through the human body on this occasion. When Peter said that he was an eyewitness of the majesty of Christ, he evidently referred to the transfiguration in which the face of Jesus shone as the sun and his garments became as white as the light. That which Peter could see is said to be the majesty of Christ. The word majesty suggests something superhuman. Hence, we are fairly safe in concluding that this bright shining of the face and the garments of Jesus was intended to be evidence of his divinity.

*Moses and Elijah talking with him.* These two Old Testament characters appeared to discuss the coming suffering of Jesus. Moses was the giver of the law; Elijah was the dean of all the prophets. Hence, we have representatives of the law and the prophets talking with Jesus. From this

we learn that these two Old Testament saints were still living, and if they were still living, it would be reasonable to conclude that all other saints of their time were still living, resting in the place where these two were resting. So the idea that men go out of existence at death and have no more conscious existence until the resurrection is seen to be false.

*Lord, it is good for us to be here.* Peter was glad to be with Jesus, but now that Moses and Elijah have appeared, his prospects for unbounded joy are heightened immeasurably, and he looks forward to the pleasure of listening to the experiences of these saints and of their relationship to the Lord and other lessons which the company of such remarkable persons could afford. Peter then, not knowing anything better to say, suggested that three tabernacles be built and that he and James and John would be the servants and the auditors of the three while they engaged in conversation beyond the ability of these three servants to engage in. Some have attempted to find spiritual significance to these three tabernacles as if it were a parallel to establishing different denominations through which to worship God. While we hold no brief for denominationalism, we do not see that these tabernacles have any such spiritual significance. Peter thought it good to build tabernacles which were temporary dwellings for the comfort of these three unusual personages. He wished to contribute to their comfort and consequently made this suggestion.

*Behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them.* A cloud is the usual indication of the presence of Jehovah. He appeared in a cloud over Sinai to speak with Moses. His presence was indicated by the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night during the wilderness wandering, and when the temple of Solomon was dedicated a cloud filled the house as an indication that the glory of Jehovah filled that house. (1 Kings 8: 10, 11.) Undoubtedly, these three disciples recognized this cloud as an indication of the presence of Jehovah, and therefore were prepared to hear a voice, and the words of our golden text were spoken on this occasion. God indicated his pleasure in his Son because of his conduct thus far in carrying out the will of the Father, which it was

his purpose to do in coming. Recognizing the presence of Jehovah and hearing his voice as he spoke was such a rapturous experience that they were sore afraid and fell upon their faces as an indication of recognition of their unworthiness to enjoy such a wonderful experience.

*They saw no one, save Jesus only.* This is said of the disciples after the cloud had been taken away and after Jesus had told them that they should not be afraid. At his assurance that no harm would befall them, they lifted up their faces from the ground and could see that Moses and Elijah were gone. The impression which was inevitably made upon them was that Jesus was still with them and that, according to the statement of Jehovah, the Father was pleased with him and they were to hear Jesus in his teaching. They could not but reach the conclusion that, as they had formerly been told to heed the teachings of Moses and the prophets, that time was gone, and from here on they would heed the teaching of Moses and Elijah.

## II. Peter Remembers the Transfiguration (2 Pet. 1: 16-18)

*For we did not follow cunningly devised fables.* Peter is saying that in his preaching, making known to them the Lord Jesus Christ, he did not follow fables cunningly devised by someone else.

*The power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* It is in connection with Peter's teaching on the power and the coming of Christ that he affirmed that he did not depend on cunningly devised fables. It is also true that the entire gospel as preached by Peter rests on something more solid and enduring than cunningly devised fables. Barnes thinks that the expression "power and coming" simply means "his powerful coming, or his coming in power." But there seems to be no good reason for thinking that the word "power" has no separate meaning of its own. The two words are separated by a conjunction, and Peter seems to remind them that he told them both of the power of Jesus Christ and of the coming of Christ. His power was manifested in his miracles, culminating in his resurrection, and the coming of Christ, of course, refers to the second coming when he shall come in glory to judge the living and the dead, to reward

the righteous, and to mete out punishment to the unrighteous. It is comforting and assuring to us to know that our faith in the power of Jesus Christ and our hope in his second coming to take us out of this world of sin and shame do not rest upon cunningly devised fables but upon the word of eyewitnesses.

*We were eyewitnesses of his majesty.* According to Vine's dictionary of New Testament words, the Greek word *eyewitness* referred to "those who had attained to the highest degree in the Greek mystery. And it suggests here that Peter, James and John had been granted the highest privilege that mortal men can enjoy, that of witnessing the majesty of Jesus Christ.. They had been given this experience to strengthen their own faith, to prepare them for the trials through which they would go incident to the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, and finally to give testimony on which we could firmly base our faith in the divinity of Jesus Christ.

*He received from God the Father honor and glory.* This refers to what Jesus received in this experience of the transfiguration. First, he received honor from God. The Father honored Jesus when he owned him as his Son. Furthermore, there was honor bestowed on him when the Father, after having removed Moses and Elijah, said that his Son was to be heard. He was honored in that he was given authority over people, an authority which had been exercised by Moses and the prophets. Jesus received glory when he was transfigured, and his face shone above the brightness of the sun, and his clothes were whiter than any tailor could make them. Those who advocate the "Jesus only" theory have an insurmountable difficulty in this passage. Here we have Jesus standing on the mountain, and he is transfigured before the apostles. On the other hand, we have the Father appearing in the cloud and speaking. Not only do we have this distinction between the two persons of the Godhead, but we have an inspired writer, saying that Jesus received honor and glory from the Father.. If there is but one person who is sometimes called the Father, and the same person sometimes called the Son, then we have the Father playing a hypo-

write by proposing to be someone else—honoring another person who, according to this false theory, is really not another person but simply another manifestation of himself.

*When there was borne such a voice to him by the Majestic Glory.* This, of course, refers to the Father speaking to the Son. Matthew says the voice which said these words came from the cloud, while Peter says such a voice was borne to Jesus by the Majestic Glory. So we know that the Father, speaking from the cloud, is the same as the voice from the Majestic Glory, since both are reported to have said the same words.

*And this voice we ourselves heard.* Here is another reason why Peter could say that his teaching was not based upon cunningly devised fables, for he had heard these things him-

self. No wonder Peter, as well as the other apostles, were willing to die in the belief that Jesus was the Son of God. For as a foundation of their faith, they had nothing less than the audible voice of the Father as he spoke from the cloud. And as if to add weight to his already weighty testimony, Peter says that this voice was borne out of heaven. Being from heaven, it could not be a cunningly devised fable.

*When we were with him in the holy mount.* Peter refers to this as a holy mount because of the presence of Jehovah and of the Son of God. If the ground at Sinai where Moses stood was holy ground because of the presence of Jehovah, then this mountain might be referred to as a holy mountain because of the presence of Jehovah there.

### Lessons to Learn

1. Since God is no respecter of persons, some people expect to have such wonderful experiences as these apostles had on the mount of transfiguration. But this experience was not to make them Christians, so people have no right to expect such experiences as this in order to make them Christians. This experience was given to the apostles to enable them to bear such testimony as will enable us to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. We walk by faith, not by sight.

2. The fact that these apostles were willing to die rather than give up their faith in Christ is proof that they did not invent this story. Men do not

give their lives to perpetuate a cunningly devised fable.

3. No heathen religion rests upon such unassailable evidence as Christianity rests upon. Such experiences as this transfiguration being witnessed by three men, and the resurrection witnessed by above five hundred men and women at one time, and Paul's experience with Jesus on the road to Damascus are experiences supported by as good evidence as any event in history. One can as easily disprove the overthrow and banishment of Napoleon as one can disprove the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

### 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

On what occasion did the Father express his pleasure in his Son?  
Can you show why the miracles of Jesus prove the endorsement of his Father?  
How does the resurrection of Jesus prove that the Father was pleased with him?  
State and discuss three ways in which Jesus pleased his Father?  
What men were regarded as authorities in religion before the time of Jesus?  
When did Jesus gain all authority?  
At what time did he begin to exercise that authority?  
What is the consequence of refusing to hear Jesus in matters religious?

#### Introduction

What two mountains have been cited as probable locations of the transfiguration?

Which is more probable?

What term does Peter use in speaking of the mountain on which Jesus was transfigured?

What do you know of the height of the mountain and its availability for use by shepherds?

Peter Witnesses the Transfiguration  
How long from Peter's confession of Christ until the transfiguration?

How do you harmonize the various statements?

What is the meaning of the word transfigure?

What of its use in other New Testament passages?

What actual changes in Jesus are specified by the apostle?

What lessons are suggested by the appearance of Moses and Elijah?

What suggestion did Peter make?

Does his suggestion have any spiritual significance?

What two sources of evidence did Peter have of the presence of Jehovah on this occasion?  
 Peter Remembers the Transfiguration  
 What is the primary lesson to be gained from this transfiguration?  
 Peter used the transfiguration to teach what two lessons with reference to Jesus?  
 Of what did Peter say he was an eye-witness?

What did Peter say Jesus received at the time of the transfiguration?  
 What does the transfiguration do for the "Jesus only" theory?  
 What importance does Peter attach to the fact that he heard the voice of God on this occasion?  
 Can you justify Peter's use of the term "holy mount"?  
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson IV—October 28, 1956

PETER DENIES THE LORD

Lesson Text

27 And Je'-sus saith unto Mark, 14:11-17  
 ye shall be offended: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad.

28 Howbeit, after I am raised up, I will go before you into Gal'-i-lee.

29 But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.

30 And Je'-sus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that thou today, *even* this night, before the cock crow twice, shalt deny me thrice.

31 But he spake exceedingly vehemently, If I must die with thee, I will not deny thee. And in like manner also said they all.

66 And as Peter was beneath in the court, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest;

67 And seeing Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and saith,

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." (Matt. 26: 41a.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Matt. 26: 36-46.

Daily Bible Readings

- October 22. M. . . . . Satan Desired Peter (Luke 22: 31-44)
- October 23. T. . . . . Peter Affirms His Faith (Mark 14: 27-31)
- October 24. W. . . . . Danger of Falling (1 Cor. 10: 1-13)
- October 25. T. . . . . Evil Heart of Unbelief (Heb. 3: 12-14)
- October 26. F. . . . . Those Who Deny the Lord (Matt. 10: 32, 33)
- October 27. S. . . . . Faithful Cannot Deny Him (2 Tim. 2: 10-13)
- October 28. S. . . . . Peter's Grief (Matt. 26: 69-76)

TIME.—A.D. 29.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jesus and Peter.

Golden Text Explained

1. Watch, (a) For attacks of Satan. We should watch Satan because he, as the god of this world, makes every effort to blind the minds of people

against the truth. (2 Cor. 4: 4.) And he uses all power and signs and lying wonders in efforts to deceive those who have not received

the love of the truth. (2 Thess. 2: 9, 10.) He goes about seeking whom he may devour. (1 Pet. 5: 8.) At other times he takes the form of an angel of light (2 Cor. 11: 14), and Paul tells us that we should put on the whole armor of God that we may be able to stand in the evil days. (Eph. 6: 10ff.) (b) Watch for opportunities for worship. We need to take every opportunity to worship God that we may build up our strength to be able to resist temptation. The Lord provided periods of worship for our growth and development spiritually and for our encouragement through fellowship with brethren. We ought, therefore, to watch for every opportunity to increase our strength and our usefulness. (c) For opportunities to help one another. Many people are prone to close their eyes to opportunities instead of watching for these opportunities. It is true that we cannot merit our eternal salvation by the performance of good works, but it is also true that no one is fit for heaven who is not engaged in good works. Consequently, we ought to watch for opportunities to do good that we may fit ourselves for heaven.

2. Pray, (a) To be delivered from the evil one. Jesus taught his disciples to pray that God would not lead them into temptation but deliver them from the evil one. (Matt. 6: 13.) Since Satan is so much wiser than we and has had at least six thousand years experience tempting the human race, it is impossible for us to resist all the temptations he is able to bring upon us. Hence, we need to pray the Lord that we may be able to direct the temptation as it approaches, that we may have the strength to resist that temptation or the courage to flee from it. (b) That we may have the courage to teach others. The apostle Paul prayed for courage to preach the word as he ought to preach it. If he felt the need to pray for courage in order to preach as he should, certainly we need to pray that we may have the zeal and the courage to teach our neighbors as we should. (c) That manner of life may be

worthy of the gospel. Paul expressed his anxiety that the Philippian brethren would "let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ." (Phil. 1: 27.) So we ought to exercise care and concern and spend some time in prayer that we may have the knowledge, the courage, and the strength to live in such manner as will be worthy of the gospel of Christ, and as will honor and glorify him who called us into his service.

3. Continue in these things, (a) Past accomplishments are not enough to save us. Regardless of how much one may have done in the past or how faithful and zealous one may have been up to this present hour, it still remains a fact that he has not done enough, that he has not been faithful enough to merit eternal salvation. Nor will one be able if he lives as long as Methuselah to do enough in the future to merit his salvation. However, we are taught that we must continue faithful unto death to receive the crown of life. (Rev. 2: 10.) (b) The need for such is as great as ever. If there has been a necessity in the past for us to watch for attacks of Satan, for opportunities to help others; if there has been a need in the past to pray to be delivered from Satan, for the courage to teach others, and that our manner of life may be worthy of the gospel, surely that need is as great now as ever. Hence, we ought to continue to watch for these things and to pray for such things as suggested above. (c) Patience to the end of the race. We are admonished to lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us. (Heb. 12: 1.) The word "patience" is used in this sentence in the sense of steadfastness. Consequently, we are admonished to be steadfast, to continue in this manner of life until we have reached the end of the race. The apostle Paul gives us a good example of this when he said, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith." (2 Tim. 4: 7.)

### Introduction

In our lesson today, we find Peter declaring that he would die for the Lord before he would deny him.

Then we find that Peter did not know what he was talking about, for he denied his Lord through fear of being

identified as one of his disciples. Then in later years, we find Paul making a similar statement as follows: "For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." (Acts 21:13b.) Was this an empty statement by Paul? No, this was not an empty statement, for from 2 Cor. 11: 23ff, we learn that Paul had faced death many times and had suffered more than death often in his persecutions. Hence, Paul was a seasoned soldier and knew whereof he spoke, while Peter was as yet an untried man in the suffering of persecution. But this also suggests another question.

Are we ready to die for the Lord? No one is ready to die for the Lord until he has (a) formed a proper relationship with the Lord, until he has through obedience to the gospel come into Christ, where he has redemption through the blood of Christ. (Eph. 1: 7.) (b) No one is ready to die until he has divorced himself from the world and the love of the world so that he can say truly that he enjoys a prayer meeting more than he enjoys a picture show or a ball game. (c) No one can say he is ready to die until he has learned to serve and worship the Lord faithfully and scripturally.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. The Denial Foretold (Mark 14:27-31)

*All ye shall be offended.* In spite of the fact that Jesus had repeatedly warned the disciples that he was to be crucified, he still predicts that all of them will be offended or caused to stumble on account of him. Back as far as the time of the transfiguration he said "he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised up. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee." (Matt. 16: 21, 22.) Even that far back, the apostle Peter was entertaining and expressing thoughts contrary to those expressed by Jesus concerning his death. And now when Jesus again says that all shall be offended, Peter still expresses his thoughts contrary to the word of Jesus.

*I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad.* This is a quotation from Zech. 13: 7. You will notice that Jesus quoted prophecy and based his prediction of the scattering of these disciples on the truth of this prophecy. Peter denied the truth of this prophecy. His statement was equal to a denial of the truth of prophecy, or a denial of the interpretation which Jesus put on this prophecy. The use of this prophecy by our Lord suggests how we ought to use the Old Testament. Jesus believed the teaching of the Old Testament; he based his prediction on this occasion on the truth of this Old Testament statement. If he had not accepted the Old

Testament as the inspired word of God, he would not have so used this scripture. Again, we should notice that this statement of prophecy is the language of Jehovah. In this he says he will smite the shepherd. Of course, the shepherd is Jesus Christ. So we have Jehovah smiting Jesus Christ. This was done either indirectly by the betrayal, condemnation, and crucifixion of Jesus at the hands of the Jews and the Romans, or directly by the submitting of his Son to such trials "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." (Acts 2:23.) And again we call your attention to the fact that there must be a distinction between the persons of Jehovah and his Son. Those who advocate the "Jesus only" theory have an insurmountable difficulty here. If there is but one person in the Godhead, how could that person make this statement concerning an experience which he would send upon himself?

*After I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee.* Jesus made this statement to encourage his disciples and to bolster them against the trials of the coming days, when they would be tempted to give up their faith in him as the Son of God. But in spite of this encouragement, two of them said in the period of despondency, "But we hoped that it was he who should redeem Israel." (Luke 24: 21a.) Even Peter felt that the cause was hopeless, for he said that God "according to his mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." (1 Pet. 1: 3.)

*Although all shall be offended, yet*

will not I. Barnes suggests three probable reasons why Peter made this statement: (a) from true love to Jesus, (b) from too much reliance on his own strength, (c) from ignorance of himself and of the trials which he was soon to pass through. Jesus also said that Satan had requested the privilege of sifting Peter and the other apostles as wheat. By this is meant that Satan had asked the privilege of trying their faith and courage on that occasion. Jesus also said that he had prayed for Peter that his faith would not completely fail him and that he would return and strengthen the brethren. (Luke 22: 31ff.) We might learn from this (a) that Satan is not allowed to tempt us without the permission of the Lord, (b) We are assured that the Lord will not allow us to be tempted above that we are able to bear, and will with the temptation provide the way of escape. (1 Cor. 10: 13.) (c) We should learn from this that we are no match in strength and wisdom for Satan and that, left to our own strength, we would all utterly fail in time of trial, (d) It is foolish and sinful for us to boast of our faithfulness as if we were standing in our own strength.

*Before the cock crow twice, shalt deny me thrice.* All the biographers of Jesus mention the crowing of the cock, but only Mark mentions the fact of the cock's crowing twice. It is usual for cocks to crow around midnight, and then again at or about the break of day. So there is no contradiction between Mark and the other writers. It was the second crowing to which the others refer, which is the same event Marks says will follow the third denial by Peter.

*But he spake exceeding vehemently.* The word *spake* is imperfect tense, which denotes that Peter kept on asserting over and over that he would not deny the Lord. The word *vehement* means acting with great force, impetuous, and passionate. All this suggests that Peter put on quite a show of courage and loyalty and determination to refrain from doing what the Lord said that he would do. He went so far as to say that he was prepared to give his life in defense of the Lord. There is no doubt as to the sincerity of Peter, but there is every reason to doubt his judgment and wisdom in

making such protestations of loyalty and faithfulness, especially in the face of our Lord's quotation and interpretation of prophecy. Mark informs us that all the other apostles said they would be willing to die for the Lord, but it is interesting to note that the word *said* is in the aorist tense, which suggests that they made one declaration and ceased. They did not continue to say over and over again as Peter did.

II. Peter Denies Three Times (Mk. 14: 66-72)

*Peter was beneath in the court.* John tells us that he was known to the High Priest and was permitted to enter the court with Jesus, but that Peter was standing on the outside and, not being known to the High Priest, was not permitted to enter until John requested the maid to allow him to enter. (John 18: 15-17.)

*Thou also wast with the Nazarene, even Jesus.* This is the first accusation, and it was made by the young lady who attended the door and allowed Peter, at the suggestion of John, to come inside. We also notice that Peter did not go with John to be at the side of Jesus, but instead he warmed himself by the fire of the servants of the High Priest. We never can know what might have happened under other circumstances, but certainly Peter did not do anything to his advantage by associating himself with the servants of the High Priest. Had he gone with John to stand by the side of Jesus, it seems probable that there would have been no such accusation as this maiden made. Peter answered this first accusation by simply saying that he neither knew nor understood what the maid was saying. This of course, he knew to be a falsehood, but perhaps in confusion could not really know why he made such a statement. As proof of Peter's willingness to stand by his word to die for the Lord, he had drawn his sword with the intention of defending his Lord when the arrest was taking place. (John 18: 10, 11.) Since Jesus would not allow Peter to defend him in the only way he knew how to defend his friend, Peter became confused, and this perhaps added to his uncertainty and confusion when he was accused of being one of the followers of Jesus. Following this first accusation and his

denial, Peter withdrew and went out onto the porch. This porch was the place where Peter was when John asked the maid to allow him to enter the hall where the trial was taking place. It would afford Peter some shelter from the cool night air and would remove him from the company of the servants of the High Priest, and no doubt he hoped would save him any further embarrassment by questions which they might ask.

*The maid saw him, and began again.* Matthew says it was another maid who made the accusation this time. He is accused again of being one of the disciples of the Lord and of having been in his company when he was arrested. Peter again denies that he is one of the followers of Jesus. Matthew adds that Peter took an oath that he was not one of the disciples of Jesus at this time. (Matt. 26: 72.) From Luke's record it seems that a man made this second accusation. (Luke 22: 58.) The truth seems to be that there were three periods of accusation, and that one or more accusations may have been made by different parties in each of these three periods. Peter was inside the court when the first accusation took place; he was outside when the second accusation took place; and back within the court when the third accusation took place, for he was within the range of the eye of Jesus. We know this to be true because following the third denial we read, "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how that he said unto him, Before the cock crow this day thou shalt deny me thrice." (Luke 22: 60, 61.)

*Of a truth thou art one of them.* This is the third accusation, and the statement is based on the fact that

Peter was a Galilean. It is a known fact that all of the original twelve apostles, with the exception of Judas, were from Galilee. But Peter, this time more confused than ever and seemingly more determined to free himself from all suspicion, began to curse and swear that he did not know Jesus. Whether Peter cursed and swore in order to strengthen his affirmation, or whether he did this to prove that his manner of speaking was not in harmony with that of Jesus and his apostles is difficult to determine. Certainly the cursing and swearing would be some proof that Peter was not one of the number of the disciples of Jesus because the speech of Jesus and those associated with him did not include such vile language. But it is also possible that he took an oath that the statements he was making were true and that he implored a curse upon him if they were false. This would account for Mark's statement that Peter began to curse and swear.

*Straightway the second time the cock crew.* The crowing of the cock called to the mind of Peter the statement of Jesus that "before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice."

*And when he thought thereon, he wept.* "By a tender and compassionate look—a single glance of his eye—the injured Saviour brought to remembrance all Peter's promises, his own predictions, and the great guilt of the disciples; he overwhelmed him with the remembrance of his sin, and pierced his heart through with many sorrows. The consciousness of deep and awful guilt rushed over Peter's soul; he flew from the palace, he went where he might be alone in the darkness of the night, and wept bitterly." (Barnes.)

### Lessons to Learn

1. We should be slow to say what we will or will not do under circumstances unfamiliar to us. Such statements betray too much confidence, a lack of wisdom, and a lack of trust in God.

2. We should keep ourselves fortified by good company. We never get too old, or too wise, or too strong to need the strength and encouragement which come from the company of good people. And we never get

to that point in life where we cannot profit by fellowship and association with good people.

3. We should rejoice in the fact that the Lord forgave Peter. If the Lord had been unwilling to forgive Peter, we would have no hope of enjoying his forgiveness ourselves. While none of us may be in the same situation in which Peter found himself, yet all of us have our moments of weakness when we forget the Lord

and when we sin against him and need the forgiveness as much as Peter needed it. Our hope of eternal life

depends upon the willingness of the Lord to forgive us over and over again.

### 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 do you know of the various types of attack by Satan?
- For what opportunities are we to watch?
- What is taught in our lesson of the connection between prayer and deliverance from Satan?
- What is said about prayer for courage to live worthy of the need of the gospel?
- What is said of the need for continuing in these matters?
- What is said of the need of patience in these matters?

#### Introduction

- What similar statements were made by Peter and Paul?
- Why do we judge Paul as wise in making his statement but Peter unwise for making a similar statement?
- What relationship is necessary to prepare one to die?
- What attitude toward the world must be developed before one is ready to die?
- What must be one's position as to service to God before he is ready to die?

#### The Denial Foretold

- What effort had Jesus made to prepare the apostles for his death?
- What was Peter's reaction to the prediction made by Jesus?
- What Old Testament prophecy did Jesus quote concerning himself and his disciples on the night of the betrayal?

- What was Peter's reaction to the interpretation Jesus put on this prophecy?
- What effect does this prophecy and its fulfillment have on the "Jesus only" theory?
- What promise did Jesus make his disciples in an effort to prepare them for the trials of his arrest and crucifixion?
- What are some probable reasons for Peter's bold assertion of loyalty to Christ?
- What lessons should we learn from his experience?
- What is said of the manner in which Peter denied he would desert the Lord?

#### Peter Denies Three Times

- Which of the disciples was known to the High Priest, and what advantage did this give him?
- How did Peter enter the place of trials? Where did he station himself?
- Who was first to accuse Peter of being Jesus' disciple?
- Where was Peter when he faced his second accuser?
- How did Peter emphasize this second denial?
- What proof did the third accuser offer to prove that Peter was a disciple of Jesus?
- What act on the part of Jesus convicted Peter of his sin of denying Christ?
- To what extent did Peter go in his effort to prove that he was not a disciple?
- What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

## Lesson V—November 4, 1956

### PETER'S FAITH RENEWED

#### Lesson Text

1 And when the sabbath was past, Mary Mag-da-le'-ne, and Mary the mother of James, and Sa-lo'-me, bought spices, that they might come and anoint him.

2 And very early on the first day of the week, they come to the tomb when the sun was risen.

3 And they were saying among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the tomb?

4 And looking up, they see that the stone is rolled back: for it was exceeding great.

5 And entering into the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, arrayed in a white robe; and they were amazed.

6 And he saith unto them, Be not amazed: ye seek Je'-sus, the Naz-a-

rene, who hath been crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold, the place where they laid him!

7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter, He goeth before you into Gal'-i-lee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

8 And they went out, and fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them: and they said nothing to any one; for they were afraid.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Je'-sus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Je'-sus Christ from the dead,

4 Unto an inheritance incorrupt-

ible, and undented, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,  
5 Who by the power of God are

guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon."* (Luke 24: 34.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Luke 24: 1-12.

### Daily Bible Readings

October 29.	M	.....	Little Faith (Matt. 6: 30; 8: 26; 14: 31; 16: 8)
October 30.	T	.....	Great Faith (Matt. 8: 1-10)
October 31.	W	.....	Faith Increased (Luke 17: 1-5)
November 1.	T	.....	How Faith Comes (Rom. 10: 1-15)
November 2.	F	.....	Faith Received Through Hearing of Faith (Gal. 3: 1-5)
November 3.	S	.....	Denied the Faith (1 Tim. 5: 1-5)
November 4.	S	.....	Precious Faith (2 Pet. 1: 1-3)

TIME.—For Mark, A.D. 29; for First Peter, A.D. 60-64.

PLACES.—For Mark, Jerusalem; for First Peter, Babylon.

PERSONS.—Jesus, Peter, and the women.

### Golden Text Explained

1. The Lord is risen, (a) Competent witnesses affirm. We are told that "historical evidence, like judicial evidence, is founded on the evidence of credible witnesses." The same authority goes on to say that the credibility of the witness depends on the four following conditions: "(1) That the facts fell within the reach of his senses. (2) That he observed or attended to it. (3) That he possesses a fair amount of intelligence and memory. (4) That he is free from any sinister or misleading interests; or, if not, that he is a person of veracity." (Why Is Christianity True? Mullins, p. 190.) If one will measure the twelve apostles by these four conditions of credibility, they will be found to be competent witnesses to testify to the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They lived with him for three and a half years in the most intimate circumstances. They heard his teaching; they heard his promises of things that were to happen beyond his death; then they experienced the fulfillment of these promises after his death. They saw him immediately before his death and then just a few days after his death. They could not possibly have been mistaken in the identity of the one whom they saw and said to be the Christ, (b) The Lord's day and the Lord's supper attest to the resurrection. Would there ever have been a Lord's day if Jesus had not been raised from the dead? The early Christians observed the first day of the week as the Lord's day in memory of the resurrection of

Jesus Christ from the dead. The Lord's supper is an institution which commemorates the death of Jesus Christ. Had Jesus died the death of an ordinary man and had not been raised from the dead, certainly no one would have kept the Lord's supper in memory of his death until he comes again, (c) The growth of the church in the first century is proof of his resurrection. The people who had a chance to know the facts believed in the resurrection. The empty tomb out in the garden just outside Jerusalem helped to convince three thousand people on the day of Pentecost that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. In a short while the church in Jerusalem came to number around ten thousand. These people were in a position to know the facts. They sifted the reports; they saw the evidence; and after giving them careful consideration, they accepted that evidence in spite of the fact that they would be persecuted by the Jewish leaders who crucified Christ. (d) The conversion of Saul of Tarsus cannot be explained on any other ground than that Jesus arose from the dead. Paul said he saw and talked with him, and under the influence of the risen Christ he changed his life and suffered immeasurable persecution through the balance of his life and died a martyr to the cause of Christ.

2. The Lord appears to Peter, (a) The first time Jesus appeared to Peter is mentioned in our text. What conversation took place between the two would certainly be interesting

reading. How Peter felt when he faced the Lord whom he had denied, and how he tried to explain why he cursed and swore that he did not know him, provided he made such an effort—all these things would make interesting reading. But they are not essential to our salvation from sin and our growth into the likeness of Christ, hence, our curiosity is not satisfied, (b) Peter saw Jesus every time he appeared to the group of apostles. Peter was with the other apostles in a room with the door closed and had the experience of seeing Jesus as he made himself visible in that room without opening the door. Then after eight days when Thomas, who was not present on the first occasion, was in the room, the

Lord appeared again without opening the door and talked with them. (John 20: 19-29.) (c) By the Sea of Galilee. Jesus appeared to his apostles by the Sea and called to them. John recognized the voice as that of the Master, and Peter swam ashore to meet his Lord and enjoy his presence. This is so much like the time when Jesus appeared on the same shore and directed the apostle to launch out into the deep, put down the nets, and catch a great number of fish. The same thing was done on this occasion, and it must have reminded Peter of the time Jesus appeared to them and called them away from their business of fishing to become fishers of men.

### Introduction

Jesus prayed that Peter's faith might not fail him during the trial which Satan was granted the privilege of giving him. There are those who think that the faith of Peter actually failed and that the prayer of Jesus was not answered in his behalf. As evidence of that, Peter's statement that he would go fishing (John 21: 3) is cited. This statement is, by some who argue thus, taken as an indication that Peter had given up his faith in Jesus as the Son of God and that he was going back to his old occupation of fishing. But those who take this position have not read very carefully, for while Peter and the others were fishing on this occasion, Jesus appeared to them and

talked with them, and John says, "This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after that he was risen from the dead." (John 21: 13.) So, Jesus had before this time already appeared to Peter individually, and then had appeared twice to the entire group of apostles with the exception of Thomas on one occasion. Peter did not make shipwreck of the faith during his denial of Christ. He did not desert the faith entirely; his faith was weakened; the light of belief was certainly dim, but it did not go out. And our Lord's expectation that he would again be able to strengthen his brethren was justified. (Luke 22: 13.)

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. The Women Find the Tomb Empty (Mark 16: 1-5)

*When the sabbath was past.* Luke tells us that the women came on the first day of the week at early dawn. (Luke 24: 1.) But Matthew tells us, "Now late on the sabbath day, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week," the women came. (Matt. 28: 1.) Some say that Matthew did not use the Jewish manner of reckoning time for one day to end at six o'clock in the evening and the next day to begin there, but that he reckoned the day as beginning with early dawn. Since Matthew wrote for Jews, this is hardly probable. Barnes resolves the difficulty by saying, "The word *end* means the same as *after* the Sabbath—that is,

*after* the Sabbath was fully completed or finished." Broadus in his commentary on Matthew quotes Grimm and Godet and other like respectable scholars to the same effect, though he expresses some dissatisfaction with that explanation. However, having none better, he accepts it. There can be no doubt from the statements of Mark and Luke that the women came to the sepulcher just as the sun was about to rise.

That *they might come and anoint him.* We are told that Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome brought spices for the purpose of anointing the body of Jesus. Partial anointing was effected at the time of his burial. (John 19: 39, 40.) "We are told they used

a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes. This would probably be a compound—the gum of the myrrh tree and the powder of the fragrant aloe would mix together, with which they would completely cover the body, which was then swathed with linen clothes, also steeped in the aromatic preparation." (Pulpit Commentary.)

*Who shall roll us away the stone from the door?* These women were concerned about how they would enter the tomb to use the spices to anoint the body of Jesus. The tomb was somewhat like a vault, large enough for people to enter, and a stone was rolled against the door or entrance to the tomb so that it would be impossible for them to enter without assistance.

*They see that the stone is rolled back.* Mark says that the stone was exceeding great, but he does not tell how the stone was rolled back. However, from another account we read, "There was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled away the stone, and sat upon it." (Matt. 28: 2.) Just when the earthquake occurred and when the tomb was opened is not clear. Such a disturbance of the earth would have been felt by the women had they been present, and we are left to conclude that the earthquake came some time before the women arrived, and they could see that the stone had already been taken from the entrance to the tomb.

*They saw a young man sitting on the right side.* This, of course, was the angel. Angels are usually in the appearance of young men, which may indicate the vigor and beauty and strength of the angels. It was said to be clothed in white, which would suggest the purity of the angel and of heaven his home.

## II. Special Message Sent to Peter

(Mark 16: 6-8)

*Be not amazed.* The angel first renders a service to the women, calming their fears and assuring them that all is well. He then tells them the purpose of their journey with the idea of gaining their confidence. They were seeking Jesus the Nazarene, who had been crucified. These statements of the young man were in harmony with what the women knew to be the truth. Therefore, they were prepared to believe the

next statement the young man would make.

*He is risen.* This the women would necessarily have to take as a matter of faith. They could see that the tomb was empty, that the body of Jesus was not therein, but whether the body had been removed by someone or whether it had risen from the dead would have to be settled on other grounds, either on faith or investigation.

*Behold, the place where they laid him!* From this we gather that these women actually entered the sepulcher and went far enough in to see the place where the body of Jesus had been placed. We are told that David's tomb was more than one hundred feet long, cut in solid rock under the ground. In many of these tombs space large enough to accommodate a body was carved in the side of the wall, and likely such a place was provided for the body of Jesus in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. (Matt. 27: 57ff; John 19: 38ff.)

*But go, tell his disciples and Peter.* These women, after seeing enough to bear testimony to the facts in the case, were instructed to go and tell the disciples what they had seen. A special mention is made of the apostle Peter. Some have taken this to mean that Jesus did not include Peter in the list of his disciples, since the angel said, "his disciples and Peter." Mention of Peter by his Lord would be a source of much comfort and consolation to Peter. It would mean that Jesus was willing to forgive and forget his denial and his oath and curses that he did not know the Lord. The message which these women were to bear to the apostles was that Jesus would meet them in Galilee according to the promise which he had made them. Jesus made this promise in connection with his statement that the shepherd would be smitten and that all the sheep would be scattered. Then he said, "Howbeit, after I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee." (Mark 14: 28.)

*Trembling and astonishment had come upon them.* This describes the attitude of the women as they fled from tomb. They said nothing to anyone as they left and wound their way through the city to their homes and to the homes of the disciples to whom they were to carry the mes-

sage. It is worthy of note that women were given the responsibility first of carrying the message of the risen Lord. They have been prominent in the church and its work ever since, and were it not for their faithful services, the church would be weakened in its efforts to carry the message of the Lord and to serve those in need.

### III. Peter's Hope Revived (1 Pet. 1: 3-5)

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* The word "blessed" is used in the sense of praise. Peter praises God the Father for the many wonderful blessings which he had received, not the least of which was that of the revival of his hope. It should be noted also that Peter attributes this rich blessing, not to any worth or merit of his own, but to the great mercy of God. God's mercy has been manifested throughout all ages in his dealings with humanity, and Peter experienced the mercy and grace of God in as great degree as anyone when he was forgiven for his denial of his Master.

*Begat us again unto a living hope.* Peter says that the Lord begat us, indicating that other apostles along with him had lost hope. The word begat is not to be taken in the sense of the new birth, for certainly Peter and the other apostles had been born again, but is here to be taken in the sense of reviving or rekindling within them the fires of hope. This hope he describes as *living*, active, and capable of sustaining them in hours of trial.

*By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.* If testimony can be relied on and facts of the past can be sustained by the testimony of men, the fact that Peter's hope was revived and that this hope sustained him to the end of life, even to the hour of death, must be accepted as unanswerable proof of the resurrection of Jesus. Peter attributes the rekindling of his hope to the resurrection. If anybody knows why his hope was rekindled, surely he knew. He once had hope in Jesus Christ; he lost that hope; and then it was rekindled. The question why was his faith rekindled must be answered. What happened to rekindle that hope? Peter says it was the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The fact that he saw Jesus again alive after

his crucifixion is the thing which Peter says rekindled his hope. If he is a competent witness, this is positive proof of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

*Unto an inheritance.* This living hope has as its object an inheritance. Paul says that we are saved in hope, but hope that is seen is not hope. Then he adds, "But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." (Rom. 8: 25.) Peter then says four things about this inheritance, (a) It is incorruptible. This word means not liable to corruption or decay. It will therefore be immortal and eternal. (b) It is undefiled. This word means free from contamination; unsoiled. "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie; but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Rev. 21: 27.) (c) It is unfading. This means that its glory will continue forever; it will not fade with the passing of time. (d) Reserved in heaven for us. The Lord went away to prepare a place for us. (John 14: 1ff.) This place is reserved for those who are faithful to the Lord.

*Who by the power of God are guarded through faith.* This identifies the people for whom this inheritance is reserved. This takes into consideration two things: (a) the power of God by which we are kept; (b) our faith in God and in Jesus Christ. There are those who make the mistake of thinking that this inheritance is reserved for the children of God regardless of whether they remain faithful, or whether they make shipwreck of the faith. But Peter says it is reserved for those who are kept by the power of God through faith. If faith is lacking, the promise here does not apply; and since we are to exercise the faith, it follows that if we deny the faith or make shipwreck of the faith we are not kept by the power of God unto this inheritance.

*Ready to be revealed in the last time.* This inheritance is reserved until the day of judgment, which is here referred to as the last time. Jesus tells us that from this judgment the faithful will go away into eternal life. This is the time when we will receive this inheritance.

### Lessons to Learn

1. The women came to the tomb with the intention of rendering a service of love. They were given the responsibility and the opportunity of rendering a far greater service than they expected to render. When we are willing to do what we can, the opportunity for greater service will be accorded us.

2. Perhaps no greater message has ever been couched in fewer words than those of the angel, "He is risen." These words have carried

more hope, kindled more joy, brought more comfort, and stirred deeper emotions than any other three words that man or angels could utter.

3. What would you give for a house and a lot in a city that is incorruptible, undented, unfading, and where your every temporal necessity would be supplied? We have a better proposition than that offered to us in the eternal inheritance reserved for us in heaven. How much are you willing to give for that place to live?

### 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

On what four things does the credibility of a witness depend?  
Can you show that the apostles meet all four of these conditions?  
Of what value are the Lord's day and the Lord's supper as proof of the resurrection of Christ?  
How does the rapid growth of the church of the first century contribute to the proof of the resurrection?  
What value does the conversion of Saul have as proof of the resurrection?  
Did Jesus have a private meeting with Peter after his resurrection?  
What other opportunities did Peter have to identify the resurrected Lord?  
The similarity of what two experiences of Peter on the Sea of Galilee would assist him in identifying Jesus after his resurrection?

#### Introduction

Did Peter make shipwreck of the faith on the night of the trial of Jesus?  
Does Peter's statement that he would go fishing indicate that he had no faith in Jesus as the Son of God?  
For what did Jesus pray concerning Peter's faith?  
Was the prayer of Jesus answered?  
The Women Find the Tomb Empty  
Can you harmonize the statements of Luke and Matthew with reference to the time when the women came to the tomb?  
For what purpose did the women come to the tomb?  
Who were the women who came that day?

About what were they anxious as they approached the tomb?

Who rolled the stone away from the tomb? Was this necessary in order that the body of Jesus might come out of the tomb?

#### Special Message Sent to Peter

What statements did the angels make which were calculated to gain the confidence of the women?

What evidence did the angel offer that Jesus had risen from the dead?

What do you know of the size and structure of tombs of that day?

On what mission did the angel send the women?

Why was special mention made of telling Peter?

How did this experience affect the women?

#### Peter's Hope Revived

What is the meaning of the word *blessed* in our text?

In what way had Peter especially enjoyed the mercy of God?

What indication do we have that other apostles had lost hope along with Peter?

What is the meaning of the word "begat" in our text?

To what was Peter and other apostles begotten?

Through what did the Lord beget them to a living hope?

Unto what was this new hope directed?

What terms are used to describe this inheritance?

If Christians are kept by the power of God, how can there be a possibility of their falling?

When is this reserved salvation to be fully revealed?

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

## Lesson VI—November 11, 1956

### PETER WRITES OF FAITH AND HOPE

#### Lesson Text

13 Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, be sober and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Je'-sus Christ;

1: 13-25 As children of obedience, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in *the time of* your ignorance:

15 But like as he who called you is

holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living;

16 Because it is written, Ye shall be holy; for I am holy.

17 And if ye call on him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear:

18 Knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers;

19 But with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, *even the blood of Christ*:

20 Who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of the times for your sake,

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"But now abideth faith, hope, love."* (1 Cor. 13: 13a.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Pet. 1: 1-12.

### Daily Bible Readings

- November 5. M. Live by Faith (Hab. 2: 4; Rom. 1: 17; Gal. 3: 11; Heb. 10: 38)
- November 6. T. . . . . Access into Grace by Faith (Rom. 5: 1-5)
- November 7. W. . . . . Children of God by Faith (Gal. 3: 26-29)
- November 8. T. . . . . Examples of Faith (Heb. 11: 1-40)
- November 9. F. . . . . Saved by Hope (Rom. 8: 18-25)
- November 10. S. . . . . Hope Laid Up (Col. 1: 1-5)
- November 11. S. . . . . Assurance of Hope (Heb. 6: 1-11)

TIME.—A.D. 60-64.

PLACE.—Babylon.

PERSONS.—Peter and the saints in Asia Minor.

### Golden Text Explained

1. Faith, (a) Comes by hearing. Paul teaches us that the faith which enables us to call on the Lord for salvation comes by hearing the word of God. (Rom. 10: 13-17.) Jesus prayed that people might believe on him through the preaching of the apostles. (John. 17: 20.) Peter said that God made choice among the apostles that by his mouth the Gentiles might hear the word of the gospel and believe. (Acts 15: 7.) From these passages we learn that the faith that saves comes by hearing the gospel preached. John says he wrote the things that he did in order that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, we might have life through his name. (John 20: 30, 31.) So our faith comes by hearing or by reading the gospel. Believing the testimony which is presented by the writing and preaching of the gospel

21 Who through him are believers in God, that raised him from the dead, and gave him glory; so that your faith and hope might be in God.

22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently:

23 Having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth.

24 For, All flesh is as grass, And all the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower falleth:

25 But the word of the Lord abideth for ever. And this is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"But now abideth faith, hope, love."* (1 Cor. 13: 13a.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Pet. 1: 1-12.

is an act of our own, hence we learn that our salvation depends upon the act of believing, (b) Faith is essential to salvation. We are told that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3: 16.) We are told also that he that believeth not shall be condemned. (Mark. 16: 16.) Faith is absolutely essential to salvation, and since it is an act of our own, we conclude that our salvation depends upon that which we can do. We do not mean by this that we merit salvation by an act of our own; we simply appropriate through faith that salvation which God promised and Jesus merited in his death, (c) Faith must be continued throughout life. Paul says we walk by faith, and we are told to be faithful unto death.

2. Hope, (a) Expectation and de-

sire. Hope is composed of these two elements. One does not hope for that he expects but does not desire, nor does one hope for that he desires but has no expectation of receiving, (b) Grounds of hope. The first ground of hope is God's promise, "in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before times eternal." (Tit. 1: 2.) The second ground of our hope is God's oath. We are told that "God, being minded to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, interposed with an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us: which we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and stedfast and entering into that which is within the veil." (Heb. 6: 17-19.) Our third ground of hope is the person and work of Jesus Christ. Paul calls him our hope (1 Tim. 1: 1), and says that Christ in us is our hope of glory (Col. 1: 27). (c) Hope purifies. (1 John 3: 3.) Hope makes it possible for us to bear our burdens, resist the temptations of life, and deny ourselves ungodliness and worldly lusts. Hope enables us to nurse our sick, bury our dead, and gather up the fragments of a shattered life and build again on the solid foundation. Through hope we reach into the future and take hold of the unseen realities that give

strength and stability to the soul in its fight against the things seen and material. By hope we reach within the veil, even into heaven itself, to lay hold upon Christ, that he may live in our hearts, gives us strength, courage, and patience; that he may be manifested in our mortal flesh, comfort us in death, and at last receive us into glory.

3. Love, (a) Based on knowledge. There can be no love for an object of which we have no knowledge. To love God and his Son Jesus Christ, we must have a knowledge of them. The knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ is obtained only through revelation, consequently we must study the revealed truths concerning God and his Son in the book which has been given us through revelation, (b) Love makes obedience a thing of joy. John says, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." (1 John 5: 3.) When John says that his commandments are not grievous, he does not mean that they are not difficult to keep, but that the keeping of those commandments, regardless of how difficult they are, is not a galling or grievous experience. (c) Love is eternal. Faith will give way to sight, and hope will be realized in glad fruition, but love goes on forever heightened by our translation from this world to the eternal world.

## Introduction

Peter's letter was written to people who lived in Asia Minor. He named the provinces as Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. The people of this section were undergoing unusual trials and persecutions. "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet.

1: 6, 7.) Since these Christians were undergoing manifold trials, lessons on faith and hope would be peculiarly in place. They needed something to bolster their faith and to increase and heighten their hope for blessings following these persecutions. For this reason Peter told them of their inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, that fades not away and reserved in heaven for them, and encouraged them to be faithful that they might receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls. (1 Pet. 1: 4, 9.)

## Exposition of the Text

I. Conduct of Children of Obedience (1 Pet. 1: 13-16)

*Girding up the loins of your mind.* This is a figure of speech which suggests watchfulness and unusual exer-

tion. When the children of Israel were readied for their departure from Egypt, they were told to keep the passover with their loins girded. (Ex. 12: 11.) So, in view of the further

trials and hardships of the Christian life, Peter exhorts his readers to gird up the loins of their minds that they may have the strength to run the race and that there may be no hindrances, as the girdle kept the long, flowing robes from hindering travel. Thus, to gird up one's mind is to take out of it those things which might hinder proper mental operation from a Christian point of view. The girding up of the mind is to be followed, perhaps as a result, by being sober and setting our hope on the grace that is to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. To be sober means to be calm and deliberate and self-controlled; and to set our hope on the grace to be ours is to direct our hope in that way, to keep that in mind, and let it serve as the basis and encouragement of our hope.

*At the revelation of Jesus Christ.* There are two common interpretations of this part of the verse. One is that the grace referred to is that which has been revealed in the sufferings of Christ and is now being revealed to us through the gospel of Christ. According to this interpretation, the word *revelation* refers to the revelation of Christ in the gospel as well as the revelation of his goodness toward us in our daily experiences. This interpretation of the verse is based on the fact that the Greek word for *brought* is in the present tense. The second interpretation is that the grace referred to is to be brought to us and is to be enjoyed by us at the revelation, the second coming, of Christ. Meyer tells us, "The present may not *arbitrarily* be taken in the sense of the *preterite*, but must be looked upon as a realization of the future." Another reason for accepting this interpretation is found in the fact that Peter uses the same expression in verse seven, where he says that their faith is to be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. In this occurrence of the phrase it can mean nothing other than the second coming of Christ, nor is there any other occurrence of the phrase, "at the revelation of Jesus Christ," where the phrase does not refer to the second coming of Christ.

*As children of obedience.* The apostle exhorts them to conduct themselves as obedient children. He then explains what he means by this ex-

pression, (a) Not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts. Being obedient children means that they will turn away from their former manner of life when they were following the course of the world. Furthermore, he says that this former manner of life was one dictated by their ignorance of God and of the ways of God. Now, since they have come to know God and his Son Jesus Christ, they are to put off that manner of life as being inconsistent with their new relationship, (b) They are to be holy because of God's holiness.

*Ye shall be holy; for I am holy.* Our obligation to be holy rests upon the fact that we have accepted as our God a holy God. People partake of the nature of that which they accept as their god. Those who make money their god are hard, unmerciful, and unkind. Those who worship the god of lust will be characterized by lust and intemperance. Those who accept Jehovah as God will partake of his nature to be holy and to exercise love and goodness and kindness and mercy.

## II. Reasons for Faith and Hope (1 Pet. 1: 17-21)

*If ye call on him as Father.* To call on God implies worshipping God, and Peter says that if ye call on God, or worship God, as your Father, you should pass the time of your sojourning in fear. But he throws in two or three things here concerning God which are of interest, (a) God is our Father. We should rejoice in the fact that we are the children of God, and as children of God we are heirs, not only of his fatherly care here, but heirs of an eternal inheritance, (b) God judges without respect for persons. Though we are told that Jesus is to be judge of the quick and the dead (2 Tim. 4: 1), we must remember that God judges the world through him (Acts 17: 31). It is also said that God is impartial in his judgment, that he will not be swayed by a person's wealth, social prominence, race, or color, (c) This judgment is to be according to our works, whether they be good or whether they be bad. So we should be careful to maintain good works, not that we will merit eternal life through our good works, but that good works are a condition of eternal salvation.

Jesus clearly taught this when he sent to eternal punishment those who refused to care for the poor and the needy and took into heaven those who had been faithful in giving to the poor, caring for the sick and those in prison for the gospel's sake. (Matt. 25: 34ff.)

*Knowing that ye were redeemed.* Peter reminds them of their redemption from sin, and he tells them that their redemption was not accomplished with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. To redeem a person is to set that person free by the payment of the ransom. Slaves were often bought by people and then set free. When such was done, the slave had been redeemed, and so Jesus redeemed us by paying a ransom price, which price is the blood which he shed on Calvary. Jesus said he came into the world for this purpose. (Matt. 20: 28.) In this verse we have proof of redemption by vicarious suffering. Modernism rejects the idea that the blood of Christ is the price of our freedom from sin. Peter says that we were redeemed "from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers," which is just another way of saying they were redeemed from sin and the consequences thereof.

*As of a lamb without blemish and without spot.* Peter speaks of the blood of Christ as being precious. It was valuable enough to affect our redemption. Then he picks up a figure which perhaps he remembered from John the Baptist in which Jesus was referred to as the lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. (John 1: 29.) As the lamb for Jewish sacrifices was to be without blemish and without spot, so the lamb which God gave for the sin of the world was without blemish and without spot, a sinless offering for a sinful world. In these verses two thoughts are suggested with reference to the blood of Christ. (a) It was the price of our redemption, redeeming us from the power and the dominion of sin. (b) It was the sacrifice of expiation, saving us from the guilt and pollution of sin.

*Foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world.* Peter says that Christ was foreknown as a lamb to be offered, and that this foreknow-

edge reached back beyond the foundation of the world. The term, "foundation of the world," refers to the creation. (Luke 11: 50, 51.) Paul speaks of God's purpose and grace given us in Christ Jesus "before times eternal." (2 Tim. 1: 9.) A comparison of Paul's statement in 2 Tim. 1: 8-11 with the verses of our text will show that the expressions, "before times eternal" and "before the foundation of the world," refer to the same thing. Though Jesus was foreknown before the foundation as a lamb, he was not manifested until "the end of the times," and that for our sake.

*Who through him are believers in God.* Peter tells us that through Christ we are made believers in God. Jesus was God manifested in the flesh so that people who saw him had seen God. (John 14: 9) And since he is God in the flesh, we come to believe on God through him and his teaching. The offering of Christ for our sins, the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and the glorifying of Christ at God's right hand were for the purpose of making it possible for us to exercise faith in God and to set our hopes upon him.

### III. Reasons for Brotherly Love (1 Pet. 1 22-25)

*Seeing ye have purified your souls.* Peter refers to some experience in the past as a time when their souls were purified. He also indicates that they had a part in this experience, for he says *they* had purified their souls. Peter does not mean to say that by their own goodness, or wisdom, or strength they had brought about their purification, but only intimates that they had a part in that. And he indicates the part which they had by saying, "In your obedience to the truth." This undoubtedly refers to the time when they, believing in Christ, repented and were baptized in the name of Christ unto the remission of their sins. (Acts 2: 38.) This agrees with Paul's teaching that when people obey from the heart the form of teaching, they are then made free from sin and become the servants of righteousness. (Rom. 6: 17, 18.)

*Unto unfeigned love of the brethren.* Peter says that the purification of their souls through obedience *unto* love of the brethren. This sug-

gests that one cannot exercise genuine unfeigned love until he has been purified through obedience to the truth.

*Love one another from the heart fervently.* Since they have rendered that obedience to truth which is necessary to make it possible for them to exercise unfeigned love, Peter exhorts them to exercise that love which they are now qualified to exercise. And Peter says that this love is to be exercised fervently. In the place of the word *fervently*, Meyer says "with strained energies," and says it denotes here "the persevering intensity of love."

*Having been begotten again.* Peter here refers to our new birth, our becoming children of God. He says that we became children of God not out of corruptible seed. The seed out of which physical life springs is corruptible, perishable, but the seed from which spiritual life is given is incorruptible and imperishable.

*Through the word of God.* From this we learn that the word of God is the seed of the kingdom. (Luke 8: 11.) According to Meyer and other eminent scholars, there is a difference in Greek prepositions of this verse which should be noted. When

Peter said our new birth is not "of" corruptible seed, he used a preposition which indicates that corruptible, seed is the *source* and *origin* of physical life. But when he said that this, new birth is "through" the word of God, he used a preposition which denotes that the word of God is the *instrument through* which this new birth is brought about. God is the *origin* and *source* of spiritual life, but the word of God is the *instrument* through which this spiritual life is imparted. "Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." (James 1: 18.) Peter continues by telling us that this word which is the incorruptible seed is something which lives and abides. All flesh will like grass pass away, but the word of the Lord will abide forever.

*This is the word of good tidings.* This word by which we are begotten again is the word of good tidings or the word of the gospel which has been preached to us. So we learn that the instrument through which God begets new life in us is the word which is preached through the gospel.

### Lessons to Learn

1. In view of difficult duties and arduous trials of life, we should be sober, set our hopes on God, and cultivate holiness in the fear of God.

2. As the slave was grateful to the one who bought his freedom, so we should be grateful to Christ for redeeming us from the domain of sin. And we should show that gratitude by our loving service to him and by bringing as many others as we pos-

sibly can to the enjoyment of this same freedom.

3. Since the word of God is the seed of the kingdom and the hearts of men are the soil in which to plant that seed, we should use every opportunity we have for teaching people the word of God. Without the sowing of seed there can be no harvest, so without the teaching of the word of God there can be no sons of the kingdom.

### 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 scriptural proof that gospel preaching produces saving faith?  
Can you quote scripture to prove that faith that comes by the hearing of the word of God is essential to salvation?  
Can you prove that faith must be continued to the end of life in order to gain eternal life?

Of what is Christian hope composed?

State and discuss three distinct grounds of Christian hope.  
What does our lesson teach about the purifying power of hope?  
What is the necessary connection between love and knowledge?  
What effect does love have on our obedience to difficult commandments?  
How does love differ from faith and hope?

#### Introduction

In what provinces of Asia Minor were the churches which Peter addressed?  
Through what experiences were these churches going which would make lessons on faith and hope especially profitable?

How did Peter describe their eternal inheritance to encourage them to be faithful to the end?

Conduct of Children of Obedience

What is meant by girding up the loins of our minds?

To what did Peter refer when he spoke of the revelation of Jesus Christ?

What does Peter mean by the children of obedience?

On what does our obligation to be holy rest?

What determines the nature of one's character?

Reasons for Faith and Hope

How should those who call on God as Father pass their time here?

State and discuss three things which Peter says about God in this verse.

What is the meaning of the word redeemed?

Why do modernists and materialists reject Peter's teaching on redemption through the blood of Christ?

Can you distinguish between the blood as the price of our redemption and blood as the sacrifice of expiation?

When did God form his purpose to offer

Jesus as a lamb for the sin of the world?

What does this imply with reference to God's foreknowledge concerning man and his sin?

What connection does Jesus have with our believing in God?

Reasons for Brotherly Love

Does man have an active part in purifying his own soul?

What is man's part in this purification?

How does Paul state this same truth?

What does Peter say is essential to unfeigned love of the brethren?

How does Peter describe the seed through which we are begotten to new spiritual life?

Can you distinguish between seed as the source and origin of life and seed as the instrument through which new life is started?

What does Peter say of the abiding qualities of the word of God?

Can you prove that the seed which imparts spiritual life is the word which is preached to us in the gospel?

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

## Lesson VII—November 18, 1956

### CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE

#### Lesson Text

1 Pet. 2: 13-25

13 Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether to the king, as supreme;

14 Or unto governors, as sent by him for vengeance on evil-doers and for praise to them that do well.

15 For so is the will of God, that by well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

16 As free, and not using your freedom for a cloak of wickedness, but as bondservants of God.

17 Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

18 Servants, be in subjection to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

19 For this is acceptable, if for conscience toward God a man endureth griefs, suffering wrongfully.

20 For what glory is it, if, when ye sin, and are buffeted *for it*, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer *for it*, ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

21 For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps:

22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously:

24 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.

25 For ye were going astray like sheep; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps."* (1 Pet. 2: 21b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Pet. 2: 1-11.

**Daily Bible Readings**

November 12-	M	Example of Humility and Service (John 13: 1-12)
November 13.	T	Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet (John 13: 13-20)
November 14.	W	Timothy to Be An Example (1 Tim. 4: 1-12)
November 15.	T	Copy of Heavenly Things (Heb. 8: 1-5)
November 16.	F	Example of the Prophets (James 5: 1-10)
November 17.	S	Example of Cities of the Plain (Jude 1-7)
November 18.	S	Examples for Us (1 Cor. 10: 1-6)

TIME.—A.D. 60-64.

PLACE.—Babylon.

PERSONS.—Peter and the saints of Asia Minor.

**Golden Text Explained**

1. Christ suffered for you. (a) In leaving heaven. Peter represents Jesus as suffering for us. His suffering began when he deprived himself of the beauties and the glories of heaven to come to this earth of sin and sorrow, sickness and death. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich." (2 Cor. 8: 9.) Then again we find the apostle Paul speaking of the condescension of Jesus, saying, "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross." (Phil. 2: 5-8.) (b) During life. The former passages suggest that of which our Lord deprived himself in his suffering for us. Now, we turn to those things which he suffered in his body and mind in order that he might save us. He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not; he was despised and rejected of men. He was accused of being a glutton and a winebibber. He was accused of lying, of blasphemy, and of deceit. He was accused of being an intimate friend of, and living in harmony with, the publicans and sinners. He was accused of being in league with Beelzebub and of casting out demons by the power of the prince of demons. He was accused of being a traitor and an insurrectionist and of stirring up trouble against the emperor of Rome. All of these things he suffered for us meekly, without retaliation or threatening, (c) In his death. The

principal suffering of our Lord for us was in his death. It was on the cross that he suffered meritoriously for us. It was there that he atoned for our sins and made it possible for God to forgive us through faith in him. In connection with the suffering, we see him denied and betrayed by his friends. We see him accused and condemned by the Jewish leaders. He was sentenced by the Roman governor and crucified by the soldiers of Rome. All this he suffered without reviling or threatening, not on account of his own sins but for our sins.

2. Leaving us examples, (a) Interest in spiritual things. Our Lord left us the example of being intensely interested in spiritual things. Sure he had sufficient interest in material things to keep himself alive and to help others live, but his principal interest was in heavenly things, (b) Using our time to best advantage. No one ever used his time to better advantage than our Lord; no one ever accomplished so much in the way of teaching and service in so little time as Jesus of Nazareth. John said that if all the things he did had been recorded, the world could not contain the books. (c) Giving our life to a worthy cause. There is nothing better that an individual can do than to determine or select a worthy cause in which he can invest his life with all his mental and physical powers. Young people should make such a selection early in life. They should be sure the cause is worthy of their mental and physical powers with which God has endowed them, and then they should try to give their whole lives to the glory of God in the accomplishment of the purposes which they have espoused.

3. We should follow in his steps. (a) Our profession obligates us to follow Christ. We profess to believe in him; we profess him as our Lord and ourselves to be his slaves. That very profession demands that we follow in his steps. (b) The world expects us to follow him. As the world stands off and looks on as we make our profession of being the slaves of Christ, that world demands of us that we live like Christ; and

if we fail, the world will criticize us, will lose faith in us, and lose interest in Christianity. (c) Our eternal happiness depends upon following him. We do not merit eternal life by our obedience, but obedience to the commands of Jesus Christ is a condition of eternal salvation. Jesus is the author of eternal salvation unto all those who obey him. (Heb. 5: 9.)

### Introduction

In our school days the teacher would teach us principles of arithmetic and then work out one problem on the blackboard as an example of how to apply that principle in the solution of practical problems. It is not sufficient just to memorize a principle, but it is necessary to learn how to put that principle into operation. So it is not enough for us to learn the principles of Christianity; we must apply those principles in everyday living. And our Lord knew that memorizing a principle of holiness and godliness would not be sufficient, that we would need to know how to apply those principles in everyday life. So God in the flesh in Jesus of Nazareth showed us how to apply the principles of holiness and godliness. If we will follow the example of Christ, we will make such application of the great principles of

Christianity as will please God. But we do not have a knowledge of these principles by reason of birth or of human philosophy; we gain a knowledge of these principles only through a study of God's word. There is no other way to gain a knowledge of the things God wants us to know; nor can we find an illustration of how these principles anywhere other than in the life of Christ and those who followed him in their manner of life. Hence, we need to study the Bible to know the principles of righteousness, and to see how Jesus applied them. And we need Christian association and fellowship with brethren that we may learn how others are applying these principles and be encouraged and strengthened in our personal application of these principles in everyday life.

### Exposition of the Text

I. In Our Relationship with All Men (1 Pet. 2: 13-17)

*Be subject to every ordinance of man.* Christians ought to be obedient to the laws of the land where they live. One can be a Christian and be a citizen of the government under which he lives. One can be true to Christ as his king and still own allegiance to the government under which he lives. Jesus taught us that we should render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. (Matt. 22: 21.) For Christians to refuse to obey the laws of the land would be to bring the church into disrepute, so Peter says for us to obey the laws of the land for the Lord's sake. Of course, there is a scriptural limitation to the obedience which we are required to render to the government. The apostles said that we must obey God rather than men.

(Acts 5: 29.) So, if the government should require something contrary to our conscience, or were to forbid us to do something which our conscience demands, we would have to disobey the government. Peter is careful to say that this subjection is to be offered to the king as supreme or to governors sent by the king.

*For vengeance on evil-doers and for praise to them that do well.* This indicates the purpose for which governments exist. (a) They exist for the purpose of taking vengeance on evildoers. Paul said, "For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. . . for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil." (Rom. 13: 3, 4.) This certainly authorizes the government to take police action against evildoers. There may be some question as to whether it would

authorize a righteous government to take police action against another government that is evil and seeking to destroy this righteous government. There is at least room for study on this question, (b) The government is for the praise of them that do well. And the apostle Paul says, "And wouldest thou have no fear of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise from the same: for he is a minister of God to thee for good." (Rom. 13: 3, 4.) The word praise in this text has the sense of commendation or approbation.

*For so is the will of God.* Peter says by so doing we shall put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. In other words, it is God's will that we should live as he has just directed so that by our well-doing we shall put to silence those who in ignorance and foolishness would criticize us or attempt to bring reproach upon us. The Greek word for *silence* is the same that one would use in speaking of muzzling the ox. It is also the same word that Jesus used when, speaking to an unclean spirit, he said, "Hold thy peace." In other words, Jesus said to the spirit, Be silent. Peter tells us that by our well-doing we shall silence, or muzzle, those who would criticize us. It should be noted too that Peter says that these whom we are to silence in this way are ignorant and foolish. The word which is translated *ignorant* suggests that one is guilty of reprehensible ignorance, and the word for *foolish* denotes a "want of mental sanity and sobriety, a reckless and inconsiderate habit of mind," or "the lack of common sense perception of the reality of things natural and spiritual . . . or the imprudent order of one's life in regard to salvation." (Vine.)

*Not using your freedom for a cloak of wickedness.* Peter admitted that they were free, free from sin, free from the dominion and power of sin, but yet this freedom in Christ did not give them permission to indulge in license. This freedom was to be enjoyed within certain limitations, and those limitations are expressed in the phrase "as bondservants of God." They were, as bond servants of God, to honor all men. They were to love the brotherhood; they were to fear God and honor the king. They should not think that their freedom

in Christ allowed them the liberty to act contrary to these limitations.

## II. Servants Follow the Example of Christ (1 Pet. 2: 18-20)

*Servants, be in subjection to your masters.* Peter now addresses those who were held in slavery. They were to be in subjection to their masters. Paul also teaches much along this line. (Eph. 6: 5-9; 1 Tim. 6: 1, 2; Tit. 2: 9, 10.) This instruction was to be followed not only by the slaves of good and gentle masters, but also of the froward masters. This word *froward* comes from the same Greek word that our word *crooked* comes. It means "metaphorically, of what is morally crooked, perverse, froward. . . of tyrannical or unjust masters." (Vine.) It is worthy of note that none of the apostles ever encouraged slaves to desert or run away from their masters. Nor did any apostle or other inspired teacher tell slaves to resist the harsh and cruel masters. They were to be subject to the good and to the evil masters, and they were to render this subjection with proper fear or respect for the authority of their masters. Slavery is sinful and contrary to the spirit of Christianity, but if the Lord had encouraged an uprising and a demand for freedom on the part of slaves, the church would have been violating the laws of the land and would have invited such criticism and opposition as would have made it impossible for it to become established and to grow in nations then permitting slavery. The Lord prefers to overcome such evil conditions in society through teaching instead of physical force.

*For this is acceptable.* For one to be acceptable to God is the same as saying that God is pleased with that person. So Peter says that God is pleased when servants endure cruel treatment from their masters, if they endure this cruelty in innocence. If the master beats the servants because he observes certain Christian principles, or because he refuses to do things which are morally wrong, God will be pleased with him. But if the servant is beaten for his wrongdoing, he gets that which he deserves, and with such God is not pleased. We may safely generalize this principle, for it applies not only to slaves but to all of us. If one is put in prison for some crime he commits, he

is not suffering imprisonment for the sake of the gospel or for the sake of the Lord. But if one does right and is imprisoned because he follows scriptural teaching, that one then is suffering for the sake of the gospel and for the sake of the Lord.

### III. Reasons for Following the Example of Christ (1 Pet. 2: 21-25)

*For hereunto were ye called.* Peter says that we have been called to a life of suffering. Since our Master suffered at the hands of evil men, we should not think servants to be above their master so as to deserve better treatment. (Matt. 10: 24-26.) The apostles all learned that they were called to follow in the footsteps of the Master so far as suffering was concerned, and Paul said that all who shall live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution, even as the Master suffered. (2 Tim. 3: 12.) And Peter points to Jesus as an example of suffering and says that Jesus left us an example that we should follow in his steps as was developed in the golden text.

*Who did no sin.* Peter enumerates a number of things in which Jesus serves as an example for us. (a) He was sinless. The Holy Spirit repeatedly affirms the sinlessness of Jesus. (Heb. 7: 26; 2 Cor. 5: 21; 1 John 3: 5b.) Jesus himself challenged his enemies to convict him of sin. (John 8: 46.) Though they often accused him of sin, it should be remembered that accusations are cheap. They were never able to produce evidence for their accusations. (b) There was no guile found in his mouth. The Greek word which is translated *guile* in our text means a bait, snare, deceit. When Peter says no guile was found in the mouth of Jesus, there is intimation that search was made by his enemies for such. And we are told that the Pharisees "took counsel how they might ensnare him in his talk." (Matt. 22: 15b.) Again we are told that the Pharisees "began to press upon him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things: laying wait for him, to catch something out of his mouth." (Luke 11: 53, 54.) But in spite of all these traps set for him, no guile was found in his mouth. (c) He reviled not again. When Jesus was delivered to the soldiers to be scourged, they spat on him; they slapped him in the

face, and yet he reviled not again. When he was on the cross, the rulers scoffed at him, the soldiers mocked him, and the thieves railed on him. (Luke 23: 35-39.) Never did any man have more just reason to threaten evildoers for their mistreatment than Jesus had on this occasion. Never did one have more power or authority for threatening and for actual punishment than did Jesus; but in spite of all the provocation he had, and in spite of all the authority which he possessed, he not only did not retaliate for the wrong done him but did not revile or threaten those who sinned against him.

*Committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.* Jesus was willing to leave the punishment of his persecutors to his Father, and in this he set us a wonderful example. Paul says, "Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but give place unto the wrath of God: for it is written, Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord." (Rom. 12: 19.) Again, "For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me I will recompense. And again, the Lord shall judge his people." (Heb. 10: 30.) In these passages we are taught that God will take vengeance on evildoers; we are to pray for them, do good to them, and overcome evil with good.

*Who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree.* This passage refers to the suffering of Christ on Calvary for the sins of the world. On the thought of Christ's bearing our sins, Barnes says, "As this cannot mean that Christ so took upon himself the sins of men as to become himself a sinner, it must mean that he put himself in the place of sinners, and bore that which these sins deserve; that is, that he endured in his own person that which, if it had been inflicted on sinners themselves, would have been a proper expression of divine displeasure against sin, or would have been a proper punishment for sin. . . . He was treated as if he had been a sinner, in order that we might be treated as if we had not sinned; that is, as if we were righteous."

*That we, having died unto sin.* Peter says that the purpose of the death of Christ was that we might live unto righteousness, but he throws in the thought that we must die to

sin before we can live unto righteousness. Hence, in our union with Christ who died unto sin (Rom. 6:10), we become dead to sin. We become so identified with Christ that his death is accepted by the Father for our sins so that we may live unto righteousness or unto God. If we were to suffer the penalty for our own sins, it would be impossible for us to come back from that suffering and live unto righteousness; but since Christ's death is accepted in lieu of the punishment we should suffer for our sins, our life unto righteousness is made possible.

### Lessons to Learn

1. Christianity makes good citizens and good neighbors of people, and any person who is not a good citizen or a good neighbor is not living up to the principles of Christianity. Regardless of how insignificant the matter may be, to the degree we fail to be good citizens and neighbors, to that degree we fail to practice the principles of Christianity.

2. People show their colors under suffering. If one is truly a Christian, he can suffer unjustly and pray for his persecutors. Any time a person fails to pray for those who do him wrong and who fails to adopt a pro-

*For ye were going astray like sheep.* People are often referred to as sheep, and the Lord is often referred to as the shepherd of the sheep. Sheep without a shepherd are confused, bewildered, and easily scattered to become lost or devoured by wild beasts. So before our conversion we are pictured as sheep without a shepherd, but now, since Christ died for us and we have accepted him as our Saviour, we are under his care. He is pictured here both as a shepherd and as an overseer.

gram of kindness and goodness toward those who treat him wrong, that person fails to be what a Christian should be.

3. We should be eternally grateful for the grace of God that offers his Son to die for our sin. And we should be grateful for Christ who was willing to die in our place. But if the Father had not been willing to accept the death of his Son in lieu of our suffering, that death on Calvary would have been no benefit to us. So we are indebted to the grace of God which made it possible for Christ's death to benefit us.

### 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 was the beginning of the sufferings of Christ on our behalf?

What is meant by the condescension of Jesus?

Did the sufferings of Jesus during his earth life prior to the cross constitute a part of his atoning sacrifice?

In what spirit did Jesus endure his sufferings?

State and discuss three examples Jesus left by which we should pattern our lives.

State and discuss three reasons why we should follow in the steps of Jesus.

#### Introduction

What is the practical value of an example in any line of endeavor?

What is the relation of the life of Jesus to the principles of Christianity?

What is the sole source of spiritual knowledge?

Of what value is Christian fellowship?

In Our Relationship with All Men

What did Jesus teach us by word of mouth and by example concerning our relationship to the government?

What limitation is placed on our obedience to the government?

State and discuss two purposes for which the government is said to exist?

How may we put to silence the ignorance of foolish men?

What is the meaning of the word "silence" in this connection?

Can you explain how one might use his freedom for a cloak of wickedness?

Servants Follow the Example of Christ  
Are servants to be obedient to cruel masters?

What is meant by the word "froward"?

Is Christianity opposed to slavery?

If so, why did not the apostles forbid Christians to own slaves?

Distinguish between suffering wrongfully and suffering for our folly.

Reasons for following the Example of Christ

Why should Christians not expect to avoid suffering in this life?

What is said of the sinlessness of Christ?

What is the meaning of the word *guile*?

What efforts were made to catch Jesus in his speech?

What provocation did Jesus have to revile those who mistreated him?

What example did Jesus leave us with reference to the way to treat our enemies?

What is meant by Jesus' bearing our sins in his body on the tree?  
 What experience is necessary that we may live unto righteousness?  
 Christ's death for sin is accepted by the Father in lieu of what?

Why are people without Christ like sheep without the shepherd?  
 What two words are used to express the relation of Jesus to his people?  
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson VIII—November 25, 1956

SUFFERING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE

Lesson Text

10 For, He that would love life, And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips that they speak no guile:

11 And let him turn a way from evil, and do good; Let him seek peace, and pursue it.

12 For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, And his ears unto their supplication: But the face of the Lord is upon them that do evil.

13 And who is he that will harm you, if ye be zealous of that which is good?

14 But even if ye should suffer for righteousness' sake, blessed *are ye*: and fear not their fear, neither be troubled;

15 But sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord: *being* ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear:

16 Having a good conscience; that, wherein ye are spoken against, they may be put to shame who revile your good manner of life in Christ.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.*" (Matt. 5: 11.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Pet. 3: 1-9.

Daily Bible Readings

- November 19. M. . . . . Persecuted for Righteousness (Matt. 5: 1-10)
- November 20. T. . . . . Fruit of Righteousness (James 3: 13-19)
- November 21. W. . . . . Suffering for Christ (Acts 5: 1-42)
- November 22. T. . . . . Godly Suffer Persecution (2 Tim. 3: 1-12)
- November 23. F. . . . . Suffering As a Christian (1 Pet. 4: 12-19)
- November 24. S. . . . . Suffering of Christ (Luke 24: 44-49)
- November 25. S. . . . . Sufferings of Paul (2 Cor. 1: 1-6)

TIME.—A.D. 60-64.

PLACE.—Babylon.

PERSONS.—Peter and the saints of Asia Minor.

Golden Text Explained

1. Persecution defined. (a) Negatively. (1) Suffering on account of pride is not persecution. There are some who have not learned to be

meek and lowly. They exhibit a type of pride which is repulsive to people. They have a "more-holy-than-thou" attitude toward people

with whom they associate. People often retaliate for such conduct and may make unkind remarks about those who thus deport themselves. This is not persecution. (2) Suffering for our peculiarities, oddities, and singularities is not persecution. Sometimes brethren have the idea that they cannot be acceptable to God and pleasing to men at the same time. We should seek first always to please God whether our conduct pleases men or not, but if our conduct is pleasing to God, we should feel good that men are pleased with it too. We do not have to act in such way as to displease men in all respects in order to be pleasing to God. And when people avoid us and make slurring remarks about us and ridicule us for our oddities, we are not suffering persecution. (3) Preachers who indulge in unkind remarks and unjustified slurs at the audience are sometimes avoided and sometimes unkind things are said about them. But when they suffer this unkindness, they are not suffering unkindness for righteousness' sake; they are simply receiving the due reward for their deeds. (b) Positively. A good definition for persecution is as follows: it is the infliction of an injury in word or in deed, or the withholding of a right, civil, social, or religious, because the person thus persecuted rendered what he regards a duty to God, or refuses to do what he regards to be wrong. (1) Jesus was persecuted because he exposed the sin of the Pharisees and scribes and Sadducees. (John 7: 7.) He not only exposed their sin, but he refused to go along with them in the observance of the traditions of the fathers. (Matt. 15: 1.) And so he illustrates what persecution is, both from the point of view of doing what he regarded to be his duty when it displeased men and of refusing to do what other people wished him to do when it was contrary to his conviction.

(2) Paul was persecuted because he opposed Jewish ceremonialism. He refused to bind circumcision upon the Gentiles, and he said that, if he should cease to oppose such ceremonialism, the offense of the cross would cease. (Gal. 4: 11.)

2. Why rejoice in persecutions? (a) We should rejoice because the time in which we suffer these persecutions is very short as compared with eternity, when we shall be blessed for the suffering. (b) Persecution is an evidence of God's love. (Heb. 12: 7ff.) (c) Persecution is an evidence of God's presence. "If ye are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are ye; because the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God resteth upon you." (1 Pet. 4: 14.) (d) Persecution purifies. Peter likens us unto gold, which when purified by fire is more valuable than before its purification. So if we are God's gold, we need not be surprised that he refines us to make us more precious and more useful. (e) Persecution brings a great reward. (Matt. 5: 12; James. 1: 12.)

3. Persecution reconciled with God's promises. God promises to be with us, to care for us, and to prosper us in all our ways provided we live righteously. But Paul tells us that all who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. (2 Tim. 3: 12.) Now, how can we reconcile these promises, promises both of the presence of God and the blessings of God and the promise that the people who live godly shall suffer persecution? First, we should remember that he does not promise to keep us from persecution, but rather he promises us that we will be persecuted. But he promises to care for us through these persecutions and not allow a trial to come upon us which we are not able to bear. (1 Cor. 10: 13.) Someone has said we have Christ *in* our hearts, but we have his cross on our shoulders.

### Introduction

Persecution of the church is not always bad. In fact, it is a debatable question whether persecution is bad for the church at all. Though some will be lost through persecution, yet there are many good effects to come to the church on account of its being persecuted. Jesus said that the gos-

pel seed falls upon the ground and some falls upon rocky places. Then he explains that by saying that the seed falls into the hearts of some people who have no root within themselves; they are not stable, "but endureth for a while; and when tribulation or persecution ariseth be-

cause of the word, straightway he stumbleth." (Matt. 13: 20, 21.) But persecution has a good effect on the church in that it purifies the church. Those who love the world so much that they go to church only as a form will be taken out. Those who do not love the church enough to go more than once on Sunday and who will not accept any duties and responsibilities for the success of the program of the church during the week will, of course, be weeded out. But that does not weaken the church. In the next place, it strengthens the

church in that it causes the members to love one another more fervently, to be more interested in one another's welfare, and to pray more fervently for one another. It also will cause them to enjoy one another's fellowship more. They are set off from the world because of the persecution, and they are thrown in one another's company more. Consequently, they are strengthened in love and fellowship, and their hope for heaven is made brighter because they speak of the reward for their suffering.

### Exposition of the Text

I. How to Enjoy Life (1 Pet. 3:10-12.)  
*He that would love life.* In the preceding verses, Peter has mapped out a course of life for those who wish to inherit a blessing. In this section of our text, he takes a statement from Psalm 34: 12ff. to substantiate what he has taught them. So, those who would desire to love or enjoy life and see or enjoy good and prosperous days should do such things as are outlined by the psalmist, (a) He should refrain his tongue from evil and his lips that they speak no guile. The student should read James 3: 1-12 for further instruction and warning against the improper use of the tongue. Slander, ridicule, sarcasm, backbiting, railing, lying, deceit, and swearing and vulgar language are all forbidden by this rule, (b) Let him turn away from evil and do good. "Beloved, imitate not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God; he that doeth evil hath not seen God." (3 John 11.) "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." (Rom. 12: 9) (c) Let him seek peace and pursue it. "Render to no man evil for evil. . . If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men. Avenge not yourselves, . . . 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." (Rom. 12: 17-20.)

*For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous.* This is given as the reason why we should refrain our tongues from evil, turn away from evil, and seek after peace. The Lord looks favorably upon those who do

right. He has just mapped out the course that is right, and then suggests that we should do this because the Lord looks favorably upon those who live such a manner of life. Not only are his eyes upon them with favor, but his ears are open to their supplication. God will hear the prayer of the righteous. "And whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight." (1 John 3: 22.) James tells us that the supplication of the righteous man availeth much in its working and then gives Elijah, a man of like passions with us, as an example of the availing power of the prayer of the righteous. (James 5: 16-18.)

*The face of the Lord is upon them that do evil.* This suggests that though God is willing and anxious to favor the righteous, his face is turned against those who do evil. The same Greek preposition is used to say his eyes are upon the righteous as is used to say the face of the Lord is upon them that do evil, but from other scriptures we learn that the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous in an approving manner while the face of the Lord is upon those that do evil in a disapproving manner. He beholds both the righteous and the wicked. He beholds the righteous with favor and blessings; he beholds the deeds of the wicked with disapproval and punishment.

II. How to Endure Persecution (1 Pet. 3: 13-17)

*Who is he that will harm you?* The apostle Peter raises the question of who is to harm those who do good? We are told that if the Lord be for

us, none can be against us. We may be persecuted for doing good, but that will purify and strengthen us and cause the Lord to bless us more richly, so there is really no lasting harm to come from that. We are told that all things work together for good to them who love the Lord. Consequently, we have no right or grounds to fear even persecution.

*Even if ye should suffer for righteousness' sake.* Peter realizes not only the possibility, but almost the certainty that we will suffer for the sake of righteousness, but that does not contradict the statement in the preceding verse that no one can harm us if we be zealous for that which is good. This simply indicates that Peter did not consider persecution a harmful thing.

*Fear not their fear, neither be troubled.* The first thing Peter tells us about how to suffer persecution is that we should not be afraid. The first occurrence of the word *fear* is a verb and means simply to be afraid. The next occurrence of the word *fear* is a noun, and it stands for that which our enemies do with the hope of instilling fear or terror in us. So Peter simply tells us that we are not to be afraid of what our enemies do for the purpose of instilling fear or terror in our hearts. If we are in the keeping of God, who has the power to make all things work together for our good, there is no reason why we should fear.

*But sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord.* To sanctify Christ means to set him apart in our hearts. We cannot sanctify him in the sense of making him holy, but we can sanctify him in the sense of setting him apart from or above every other thing in our hearts. Peter says we are to sanctify him as Lord, that is, we are to set him apart or above everything and everybody else, to respect and reverence him as Lord. This respect is set in apposition to the preceding verse, so the meaning is that we are not to be afraid of that which our enemies use to terrify us, but on the other hand, we are told to enthrone Christ in our hearts as Lord so that we will rest securely in his promise of protection and deliverance from trials too hard for us to bear.

*Ready always to give answer to every man.* This is the next thing we are to do to endure persecution.

First, Peter tells us that we are not to be afraid of our enemies but to enthrone Christ in our hearts as our Lord and protector. Next, we are to be ready with an answer for the hope that we entertain. In order to be ready to give an answer, one must study the word of God and store it up in his heart. When Jesus was tempted, he was able to say, "It is written," and thus put to flight his adversary. So we are to store the word in our heart that we may have it ready for use in times of trial and temptation. This not only protects us, but it serves to do good to them to whom we have opportunity to speak.

*With meekness and fear.* We are to be careful to maintain a Christlike attitude in giving our answers. Sometimes we are inclined to be proud, caustic, and self-sufficient when answering those who ask us for reasons for our scriptural position. We may by manifesting an unchristlike attitude drive people farther away from the truth than when they asked the question. The meekness of this text is to be manifested toward those who ask the question, and the fear is to be manifested toward God.

*Having a good conscience.* This is the next thing which Peter mentions in answer to how we are to endure persecution. We are to live in such way that we will maintain a good conscience. The individual who can pillow his head at night in the humble realization that he has walked a godly course during the day need not have any fear of what his enemies may say or do. But if he does not have a clear conscience, he will be compromised in any effort he may put forth, either to teach his neighbors the way of righteousness or to expose their sins. We should notice that having a good conscience does not necessarily free us from persecution, for some may revile us even though we have a good conscience. But should they so revile us, they may be put to shame because of the manner of life we live. But if we do have a clear conscience, we will know that we are suffering for the Lord instead of suffering the due reward of our evil deeds.

III. Christ Our Example of Suffering  
(1 Pet 3: 18-22)

*Because Christ also suffered for sins once.* Peter gives Christ as the

perfect example of suffering for well-doing, rather than on account of wrongdoing. We are repeatedly told that Jesus lived a sinless life, so Peter says that Christ suffered "the righteous for the unrighteous." Peter tells us that Christ suffered *once*, and the writer of Hebrews says that the blood of Christ did not have to be shed often as the blood of animals under the law, "but now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." (Heb. 9: 26.) This indicates the immeasurable value of the blood of Christ as an atonement.

*That he might bring us to God.* This teaches that the death of Christ was for the purpose of bringing us to God. Jesus says no one can come to the Father but by him, and Paul tells us that we have access unto God through Christ. (Rom. 5: 2; Eph. 2: 18.) In this we have an indication of the terrible consequences of sin. Sin did something to humanity that made it impossible for humanity to come back to God except through the death of the sinless Son of God.

*Being put to death in the flesh.* Here we have flesh used in apposition to spirit. Jesus died in the flesh but was made alive in the spirit. This simply indicates that the humanity of Jesus died, but that the part about him which was divine, which was God, lived. The expression, "made alive in the spirit," is not to be taken as a resurrection from the dead. Spirit, being the offspring of God and in the case of Jesus being divine, could not die and consequently could not be made alive in the sense of being raised from the dead. So the spirit was made alive in that it was freed from the limitation and burden of human flesh and was so energized in a new relationship that Peter used this term to describe it.

*He went and preached unto the spirits in prison.* We are told that Jesus went in the spirit and preached to spirits in prison. Some think this means that while his body was in the grave his spirit went to Hades to preach to the spirits imprisoned there. If so, what did he preach? To whom did he preach? And for what purpose did he preach? He could not have preached the gospel as we now know it, nor could he have preached

to all the Hadean world without giving them a second chance. Usually those who take this position say that Jesus preached only to people who had never had a chance to obey the Lord during their lifetime, but Peter tells us that he preached to people who were disobedient in their lifetime. This would be giving them a second chance. The purpose of such preaching could not be to offer them release from Hades because we are told by Abraham that not one person ever leaves there. (Luke 16: 26.)

*When the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah.* This tells us that these spirits which were in prison at the time of Peter's writing were disobedient during the days of Noah. They were then human beings on earth as we are now, and preaching was done to them, and they disobeyed that preaching. At the time of Peter's writing they were, of course, dead physically, but their spirits were in prison. The disobedience was in the days of Noah, but they were disobedient to the preaching that was done. Therefore, the preaching was done in the days of Noah. So we learn in this passage that the spirit of our Lord which tabernacled here for thirty-three years in flesh went in the days of Noah and preached through Noah to the people associated with Noah. We have an illustration of this in these words: "And he came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were nigh." (Eph. 2: 17.) This passage tells us that after Jesus had made peace between us and God through the blood of the cross, he came and preached to Jews and Gentiles. Of course, we know that he came in the person of the Spirit, which spoke through the apostles and prophets unto Jews and Gentiles. If Jesus could come and preach through these apostles, he could go and preach through Noah.

*Eight souls were saved through water.* Water was used as the instrument of saving Noah and his family in that it lifted up the ark in which Noah and his family resided and carried it out of a world of wickedness and set it down in the world of righteousness. So through water Noah and his family were transferred from a world of wickedness to the world of righteousness.

*Which also after a true likeness*

*doth now save you, even baptism.* Peter says that baptism saves us like water saved Noah. So we conclude that baptism saves us in that it is that act through which we are translated from a relationship of sinfulness into a relationship of holiness. It takes us out of the kingdom of darkness and translates us into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Now, baptism alone does not do that, but it is the instrument through which God makes that translation. Certainly it is God who saves us from sin and puts us into the kingdom of God, but he uses an instrument which is baptism.

*Not the putting away of the filth of the flesh.* This simply means that baptism is not for the purpose of cleansing the flesh from physical filth; but since it is not the putting away

of the filth of the flesh, there is an indication that it is for the purpose of putting away some kind of filth. Hence, we conclude with Peter that baptism is for the remission of sins (Acts 2: 38), and with Ananias that in connection with baptism sins were washed away (Acts 22: 16).

*But the interrogation of a good conscience toward God.* The word interrogation is not very satisfactory. Baptism does not ask a question. Another version gives this statement, "But the requirement of a good conscience toward God." Since baptism is a commandment, and one must obey the commandment to have a good conscience, it follows that a good conscience requires us to be baptized in the name of Christ for the remission of sin.

### Lessons to Learn

1. All should love life and wish to see good days. Hence all of us should study closely what the Bible teaches us to do in order to have good days. We do not learn from science or philosophy what things bring human happiness here or eternal happiness after death. These things are to be learned only from God's revealed truth.

2. It is human to avoid suffering. So a lot of us compromise the truth in order to avoid persecution, while others of us neglect to teach our neighbors the truth because we are

afraid we will lose their friendship or that we will be ostracized from their society.

3. Peter says baptism saves. To deny this plain, positive statement is to put ourselves in a class with infidels. Faith saves, but faith is not our saviour; repentance saves, but repentance is not our saviour. So we ought to reach the conclusion that baptism can save, and yet we will not defy baptism so as to make that act our saviour. It is simply a condition of our salvation.

### 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  
State and discuss three ways people may suffer for their deeds, when such suffering is not persecution.  
Can you give a good definition for persecution?  
Can you show how Jesus was persecuted for his speech and for his action?  
Show how Paul becomes an example to us in the way in which he was persecuted.  
State and discuss four reasons why we should rejoice in persecution.  
Can you reconcile persecution with the promises of God to care for his people?

#### Introduction

Is persecution always bad for the church? Why?  
If the church were to fall into persecution, what type of members would be the first to quit?  
What effect would persecution of the church have on the love of members for each other?

#### How to Enjoy Life

From what source does Peter draw the teaching of this passage?  
What does this teach us as to our use and regard for the Old Testament?  
State and discuss two things which Peter says are necessary if we would enjoy life.  
What is said of the attitude of the Lord toward the righteous and toward the evil?

#### How to Endure Persecution

What promise of God should take away all fear of harm from others?  
How could Peter correctly say that none will harm the Christian when he knew these Christians were suffering persecution?  
What are the two meanings of the word *tear* in this text?  
What is meant by sanctifying Christ in our heart?  
In what condition will one be who has sanctified Christ in his heart?  
In what spirit are we to answer those who question us?  
What is said about having a good conscience?

**Christ Our Example of Suffering**  
 What indicates the value of the blood of Christ as an atonement for our sins?  
 What is the purpose of the suffering of Christ as stated by Peter?  
 In what was Christ put to death and in what made alive?  
 Can you explain what is meant by Christ's going and preaching to spirits in prison?  
 Can you show that this does not give some people a second chance?

How did Jesus come and preach to Jew and Gentile?  
 To what does Peter attribute the salvation of Noah?  
 Can you show how this is the picture of our salvation through baptism?  
 Does the filth of the flesh in this passage refer to sin?  
 If not, to what does it refer?  
 What is meant by the interrogation of a good conscience toward God?  
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

## Lesson IX—December 2, 1956

### SUFFERING AS A CHRISTIAN

#### Lesson Text

1 Forasmuch then as Christ suffered in the flesh, arm ye yourselves also with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;

2 That ye no longer should live the rest of your time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

3 For the time past may suffice to have wrought the desire of the Gentiles, and to have walked in lasciviousness, lusts, winebibbings, revellings, carousings, and abominable idolatries:

4 Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with *them* into the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:

5 Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the living and the dead.

6 For unto this end was the gospel preached even to the dead, that they might be judged indeed according to

1 Pet. 4: 1-6, 12-16  
 men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you:

13 But inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice; that at the revelation of his glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy.

14 If ye are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are ye*; because the *Spirit* of glory and the Spirit of God resteth upon you.

15 For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or as a meddler in other men's matters:

16 But if *a man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."* (Acts 11: 26b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Pet. 4: 7-11.

#### Daily Bible Readings

November 26.	M.....	Suffering with Christ (Rom. 12: 8-17)
November 27.	T.....	Suffering Foretold (1 Thess. 3: 1-9)
November 28.	W.....	Suffering for Well-doing (1 Pet. 2: 18-25)
November 29.	T.....	Paul's Desire for Agrippa (Acts 26: 24-29)
November 30.	F.....	After Suffering, Salvation (1 Pet. 5: 5-11)
December 1.	S.....	Example of Suffering (James 5: 1-10)
December 2.	S.....	Fellowship with Christ's Sufferings (Phil. 3: 1-10)

TIME.—A.D. 60-64.

PLACE.—Babylon.

PERSONS.—Peter and the saints of Asia Minor.

## Golden Text Explained

1. Disciples, (a) Meaning of the term. Our word disciple is from a Greek word which means a learner, and that Greek word is from another Greek word "indicating thought accompanied by endeavor." In the days of our Lord it was common for groups of learners to attach themselves to their favorite teacher. John the Baptist had groups about him, and groups associated themselves with Jesus to learn from him. These groups of learners were disciples, (b) Use of the word in Acts. With the exception of two occurrences, the word in Acts of Apostles refers to baptized believers. Paul found certain disciples at Ephesus (Acts 19:1), but these were disciples of John, whom Paul taught the word of the Lord more accurately and then baptized them. Again, Paul told the Ephesian elders that some of their number would depart from the faith and draw away disciples after them. (Acts 20:30.) Out of thirty appearances of the word in Acts, it refers twenty-eight times to baptized believers. (c) How disciples were made. Jesus gave the apostles commandments to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. (Matt. 28:19.) The participial phrase following the command to make disciples explains how the command is to be carried out. "The present participle denotes the mode of initiation into discipleship. Make them disciples by baptizing them." (Pulpit Commentary.) Again, "baptism the condition of discipleship—make disciples by baptizing." (Expositor's Greek Testament.)

2. Were called Christians, (a) Divinely called. The word which is translated "were called" is used nine times in the New Testament. In seven of these occurrences it is translated to mean divinely called, or called by divine authority. In Matt. 2:12, 22; Acts 10:22; Heb. 8:5; 11:7, this word is translated "warned, or admonished, of God." There is no word in the Greek sentence for *God*; it is a part of the translation of this word with which we are dealing in our text. In Rom. 7:3 Paul tells us that, if a woman marries another man while her first husband lives, she shall be called an

adulteress. There is nothing in the verse except the meaning of this word, to prove that she shall be called by divine authority an adulteress. Yet in the eyes of the world one may divorce and remarry as many times as she likes and, so far as the world's standards are concerned will not be called an adulteress. It is only by God's standards that one who so marries, is called an adulteress. Hence, we may say that this use of the word is no exception; one who divorces except for fornication (Matt. 19:9), and marries another during the lifetime of the first partner shall be called by divine authority an adulterer or an adulteress. So we conclude from the general use of the word in the New Testament that the disciples were called Christians by divine authority in Antioch. There is no way of knowing positively through whom the name came, but since there were inspired apostles and prophets in the church at Antioch, it is reasonable to conclude that the name came through one of these inspired men. (b) Is this in fulfillment of prophecy? Many good brethren believe and affirm confidently and positively that the name was given in fulfillment of the prophecy in Isa. 62:2, which reads, "And the nations shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory, and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of Jehovah shall name." It is true that Gentiles had seen the righteousness of God at the time the gospel was preached at Antioch, a Gentile church. And it is true that kings had beheld the glory of the Lord as the gospel had been preached before them, and as they had seen their subjects obey the gospel and live in harmony with it. But we are told in the context of this prophecy what that new name would be. We read, "Thou shalt no more **b2** termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land anymore be termed Desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah." (Isa. 62:4.) Prophecies sometimes have both a *near* and a *remote* fulfillment. I am sure this prophecy had its primary, or near, fulfillment in the return of the Jews from captivity and their settlement in Jerusalem, enjoying the favor of the providence of Jehovah. Hephzibah

is the new name which Isaiah promised would be given them when their land was married to Jehovah. There is a possibility that this prophecy had its remote fulfillment in the giving of the name Christian to the disciples in Antioch. However, this writer has proceeded on the basis that we can never know that any given event is in fulfillment of any certain prophecy unless some inspired man has said that this event fulfills that prophecy. This may be ultra-conservative, but I can see no harm that can possibly come from

this course, and I can see the possibility of untold harm coming from everyone's being allowed to assume that this or that event is the fulfillment of a certain prophecy of the Old Testament which has not been so interpreted by divine authority.

3. Why is the name Christian applicable? (a) Because of our union with Christ, (b) The name Christian is applicable because of our likeness to Christ in our everyday life, (c) The name Christian is applicable because in the wearing of it we honor Christ.

### Introduction

Paul said that he had suffered more than any of the other apostles, and we may safely conclude that he had suffered more than any other person of his time. And yet he could say, in spite of all this suffering, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed to us in the life to come. (Rom. 8: 18.) Surely if Paul could say that the sufferings we undergo here are not worthy to be compared with the glory we will enjoy after a while, all of us should be ashamed to murmur or complain at the little suffering which we are called to endure. And Paul also teaches that our being joint heirs with Christ depends upon our willingness to suffer with him here. (Rom. 8: 17.) If we refuse to suffer, if we compromise the truth

and through fear of suffering fail to do our duty, certainly we shall not be heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. But Paul could rejoice in the opportunities to suffer. He said, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." (Col. 1: 24.) In this verse Paul says that he is happy to suffer for these brethren at Colossae, because that only affords him an opportunity to fill up that portion of suffering in his flesh which he feels that he ought to suffer for the sake of Christ. Paul thought that as long as he had not suffered as much as Christ he yet lacked something of the suffering in the flesh that he ought to endure.

### Exposition of the Text

I. Suffering to Live by the Will of God (1 Pet. 4: 1-6)

*Arm ye yourselves also with the same mind.* Peter starts out by saying that, as much as Christ suffered in the flesh, we as his disciples who intend to live like he lived, stand for the things for which he stood, and oppose the things which he opposed, should expect to suffer like he suffered.

*He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.* Suffering for righteousness' sake tends to purify the individual. Those who are enduring suffering do not have a disposition to toy with temptation and to expose themselves to the possibility of sinning. This, of course, applies only to those who suffer with the same mind that Jesus had. There

are some who allow their sufferings to embitter them, to cause them to doubt the goodness and the provident care of God, and so to apostatize from the church. But those who have the mind of Christ with reference to suffering will be drawn closer to Christ, will see the blessedness of that suffering, and will take advantage of the opportunity to glorify Christ in the body.

*Ye no longer should live the rest of your time.* Peter says that those who are living for Christ should arm themselves with that mind or that determination, resolution, that they will not live any longer to the fulfilling of the desires and lusts of their flesh, but that they will live the balance of their lives to the fulfilling of the will of God. This is a practical les-

son that every one of us should learn and apply more diligently in our lives. We are not to live for the satisfaction of our desires, but we are to live to the accomplishment of the will of God. One does not have to indulge in immorality to do what Peter says we should not do. One can live simply to the satisfying of his inclination for innocent pleasure, giving his whole time and energy to such, and fail to live for the accomplishment of the will of God. Many people in the church today are living to satisfy their desires for pleasure, for ease and comfort, and to satisfy their longing for a sense of worldly security. They give their whole thought and attention, their energy to the securing of these things, while they give only a little time on Sunday morning to thinking of heavenly things.

*For the time past may suffice.* Peter says that we have already lived long enough in sin. If one has spent any time at all, he has spent too much time in sin. The devil does not deserve any of our service; he does not deserve to be honored with our physical, mental, or moral strength. We are endowed with these things in order that we may glorify God. Peter then names a number of the things most prevalent among the Gentiles of that time, (a) Lasciviousness. This is a big word for loose living with the emphasis on those things that tend to stir up lusts and evil desires, (b) Lusts. In three occurrences of the Greek word which is translated lusts, it has a good meaning, but everywhere else it has a bad sense. It is a word which denotes strong desire of any kind and usually refers to those evil desires which are ready to express themselves in bodily activity. And such activity is denoted as will be inconsistent with the will of God. (Vine.) (c) Wine-bibbings. This is a word which suggests heavy drinking and drunkenness, (d) Revelings. This word originally meant just merrymaking, but came to have a meaning of rioting and carousing, and usually in connection with strong drink. (e) Carousing. This also has the idea of drink in connection with it, and such drinking bouts as suggested rivalry and loud, noisy, coarse, and vulgar activity, (f) Abominable idolatries. This re-

fers to idolatrous practices in which abominable, sensual rites of immorality were practiced.

*Wherein they think it strange.* Peter says when we quit living in sin and turn to God, the people with whom we were formerly engaging in sin will think it strange that we have reformed, that we have turned away from sin, and are now living for God. And they will speak evil of us because we have condemned them by our reformation. Noah is said to have condemned the world in which he lived. (Heb. 11: 7.) The only way he could have condemned the world was by refraining from sin and engaging in righteousness. So when we turn away from sin to engage in godliness, we condemn those who were our former associates in sin, if they are not willing to quit sin and serve God with us.

*Who shall give account to him.* Peter suggests that we, as well as those who still continue to live in sin, must give account to God who is ready to judge the living and the dead. The very fact of having to give account for the way we live in this life should be sufficient motive to turn us from sin to live unto righteousness.

*For unto this end was the gospel preached.* Peter says it was for this very purpose that the gospel was preached to them that are dead. What was the purpose for which the gospel was preached? The answer is that they might be ready to give account to him who is to judge the living and the dead. The word *dead* refers not to those who are dead in sin, but to those who are dead physically. The gospel was preached to them when they were alive; they have since died. "According to men in the flesh," that is, men governed by fleshly motives and standards, they have been judged, condemned, persecuted. But according to God they have been made to live in a higher realm. "Men judge them severely, and put them to death for their religion; God gave them life, and saved them. By the one they were condemned in the flesh—so far as pain, sorrow, and death could be inflicted on the body; by the other they were made to live in spirit—to be his, to live with him." (Barnes.)

## II. Suffering for the Name of Christ (1 Pet. 4: 12-16)

*Beloved, think it not strange.* Peter says these brethren should not think it strange or inconsistent with their profession that they should be suffering persecution. Those who were determined to live godly would suffer persecution. (2 Tim. 3: 12.) Their Master suffered before them, warned them that if they followed him they would suffer, but promised them his presence to encourage, to strengthen, and finally to assure their victory over trials.

*Ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings.* To the extent that these Christians were partakers of Christ's suffering, they should rejoice because they would also be partakers with him in the joy of victory.

*At the revelation of his glory.* This is a term which suggests the second coming of Christ to judge the world. Jesus spoke of the Son of Man coming in his glory with the angels with him. (Matt. 25: 31.) This will be a display of both the glory, the majesty, and the power of Jesus Christ, and when he thus comes those who have suffered for righteousness' sake will be partakers in that glory.

*ye are reproached for the name of Christ.* Peter narrows the field of persecution here by the use of the word *reproached*. It means to revile, to slander, to insult, and to speak disparagingly and disgracefully of one. To be reproached for the name of Christ is to be reproached because one belongs to Christ. He is wearing the name of Christ, living like Christ, endeavoring to honor Christ, and for this he suffers reproach. So this reproach is suffered for, or in the name of, Christ. The word *blessed* in this text means happy. Peter says that one should be happy when he is reproached for the name of Christ. We should count it an honor to suffer for our Lord. And the reason why we are to be happy in this suffering is stated in these words: "Because the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God resteth upon you." Peter assures these sufferers of the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. He describes this third person of the godhead as "the Spirit of glory" and as the "Spirit of God." Both of these terms refer to the third person of the godhead and, though this is not offered as a translation, the idea of

the statement is this, that those who suffer reproach for the name of Christ should be happy because this is an indication that the glorious Spirit of God abides upon them.

*For let none of you suffer as a murderer.* Peter warned them against suffering as evildoers, or even as a meddler in other men's matters. It is a glorious thing to suffer for righteousness' sake, but it is a dishonorable and shameful thing to suffer as an evildoer or as a meddler in other people's business. This latter thing is all too common in society today. People are sometimes so busy attending to the affairs of others that their own affairs get in arrears. Paul says we should study to be quiet and mind our own business, work with our own hands that we may walk becomingly toward them that are without and have need of nothing. (1 Thess. 4: 11, 12.)

*But if a man suffer as a Christian.* This is an indication that the word Christian was common to the people of Asia Minor at the time this epistle was written. This also indicates that some were suffering as Christians, and on account of the fact that they were Christians. Peter says that we should not be ashamed to suffer as Christians, and implies that we ought to be ashamed to suffer as an evildoer or as a meddler in other people's business.

*Let him glorify God in this name.*  
(a) We glorify God when we wear the name of Christ. Since the church bears the same relationship to Christ as the wife has to her husband, it is necessary that the church wear the name of Christ in order to honor Christ. The wife who refuses to wear the name of her husband dishonors the husband, so the people of Christ would dishonor Christ if they refused to wear his name, (b) We glorify God when we suffer in that name. The apostle Paul said that he intended to magnify Christ in his *body* whether by life or by death. (Phil. 1: 20.) Those who through fear of death compromise or blaspheme the name of Christ dishonor the name of Christ, while those who suffer persecution or martyrdom glorify God in that name, (c) We glorify God in that name when we so live, serve, and worship as to cause other people to magnify the name of Christ.

**Lessons to Learn**

1. We should do our best to convince those out of Christ that they have lived long enough in the lusts of the flesh. If one has served Satan one hour or one day, he has given Satan more service than is due him. He ought, therefore, to break away from the dominion of sin and let not sin continue to reign in his mortal flesh.

2. Do we condemn the world by godly living? Or do we justify and

encourage the world by having fellowship with the world in its worldliness? Have we truly come out of the world to be no more a part of it?

3. Do you let people among whom you circulate know that you wear the name of Christ? Do you so wear that name as to let them know you are not ashamed of it? Do you so wear that name as to honor and glorify Christ?

**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 the meaning of the word *disciple*?
- What do you know of the use of this word in the book of Acts?
- What did Jesus teach about the way to make disciples?
- Can you show that the disciples were given the name Christian by divine authority?
- Through what source was the name most probably given?
- Was the name given as the primary fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy?
- What about the possibility of the name being given in remote fulfillment of the prophecy?
- Give three reasons why the name Christian is most applicable to the followers of Christ.

**Introduction**

- How did Paul's suffering compare with that of other apostles?
- How did Paul view his suffering in comparison to the glory which he anticipated?
- Upon what condition are we said to be joint heirs with Christ?
- Why did Paul rejoice in opportunities to suffer for Christ?
- Suffering to Live by the Will of God
- With what mind should Christians arm themselves?
- What is said of those who have suffered in the flesh?
- Contrast two effects which suffering may have upon people.

- Does one have to be immoral in order to live for the satisfying of his lusts and appetites?
- What does Peter say about the time which people give serving Satan?
- What is the meaning of lasciviousness?
- May the word "lust" have a good meaning?
- What is its meaning as used in this verse?
- What is a winebibber?
- Wherein is the sin of moderate use of wine?
- What is meant by reveling and carousing?
- Distinguish between idolatry and abominable idolatry.
- What is likely to be the attitude of a Christian's former associates in evil?
- Can you explain Peter's statement about the gospel being preached to the dead?

**Suffering for the Name of Christ**

- Why should Christians not think it strange if they suffer persecution?
- Why should Christians rejoice to be partakers in Christ's suffering?
- What is meant by the revelation of Christ's glory?
- Explain what is meant by being reproached for the name of Christ.
- What reason is assigned why we should be happy to be so reproached?
- What reference is made to meddlers?
- What does Paul say about minding our own business?
- What suggests that the name Christian was widely used among the churches of Asia Minor?
- State and discuss three ways in which we may glorify God in the name Christian.
- What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

**Lesson X—December 9, 1956**

**EXHORTATIONS TO HUMILITY AND FAITHFULNESS**

**Lesson Text**

5 Likewise, ye younger, be subject unto the elder. Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility, to serve one another: for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.

6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time;

7 Casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you.

8 Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

9 Whom withstand stedfast in your faith, knowing that the same suffer-

ings are accomplished in your brethren who are in the world.

10 And the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after that ye have suffered a little while, shall himself perfect, establish, strengthen you.

11 To him be the dominion for ever and ever. A-men'

12 By Sil'-va'-nus, our faith-

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king." (1 Pet. 2: 17.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rom. 12: 9-21.

**Daily Bible Readings**

December 3.	M.	Humble Saved (Job 22: 21-30)
December 4.	T.	Humble and Contrite Spirit (Isa. 57: 14-21)
December 5.	W.	Grace Given to Humble (James 4: 1-6)
December 6.	T.	Promise to the Humble (2 Chron. 7: 11-18)
December 7.	F.	Example of Christ (Phil. 2: 1-8)
December 8.	S.	Reward of Humility (Prov. 22: 1-4)
December 9.	S.	Humility Before Honor (Prov. 15: 29-33)

TIME.—A.D. 60-64.

PLACE.—Babylon.

PERSONS.—Peter and the saints in Asia Minor.

**Golden Text Explained**

1. Honor all men. (a) For their relation to God. Man was made in the image of God. Regardless of how much that image has been marred through sin and a life of shame and ungodliness, man still has to some extent the image of God. And for this reason, man deserves to be honored above brute creation regardless of his sinful condition. In the next place, man is said to be the offspring of God. (Acts 17: 28, 29.) There is in man that eternal nature that is the offspring of God. This the brute creation does not have, nor does the vegetable creation. This distinguishes man from all other creatures of God and entitles him to honor. And the fact that man must spend eternity somewhere, that he is an indestructible creature, that he will be eternally conscious entitles him to honor. (b) For their value. Man has a value as implied in the offering of the blood of Jesus Christ for his redemption. The brute creation and vegetable creation do not have this value; Jesus did not die for these divisions of God's creatures. Consequently, this indicates man's superiority and his greater value. (c) For what man can become. The incarnation of Jesus Christ in human flesh proves that God can dwell in humanity. The gnostic had the idea

ful brother, as I account *him*, I have written unto you briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God: stand ye fast therein.

13 She that is in Bab'-y-16n, elect together with *you*, saluteth you; and *so doth* Mark my son.

14 Salute one another with a kiss of love. Peace be unto you all that are in Christ.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king." (1 Pet. 2: 17.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rom. 12: 9-21.

**Daily Bible Readings**

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TIME.—A.D. 60-64.

PLACE.—Babylon.

PERSONS.—Peter and the saints in Asia Minor.

**Golden Text Explained**

that the human body is essentially evil, being material, and therefore God does not dwell in humanity. But the incarnation of Jesus Christ proves that human theory to be false. Again, the resurrection of Jesus Christ proves that humanity can be fitted for dwelling in heaven. So, we ought to honor all men because they can become a fit place for the indwelling of God through his Spirit, and all men can become fit for dwelling in heaven.

2. Love the brethren. (a) God loves all his children. If God loves them, we ought to love them. (b) Love for the brethren is a condition of our love for God. We are told, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also. (1 John 4: 20, 21.) (c) The church affords the highest and purest satisfaction for the human desire for social intercourse. The church is composed of the brethren. In this relationship, the redeemed, the children of God, have the opportunity of satisfying their desires for social intercourse in the purest and sweetest and highest relationship.

3. Fear God. (a) We should fear God in the sense of reverencing him for his creative powers. As we view that portion of the universe that we can see, we stand in awe at the power that spoke these things into existence and which preserves them in their movements year after year and millennium after millennium. (b) Respect his authority over us. The fear of God includes our respect for the authority of God over us. Certainly we are not to fear God as we fear a wild animal, or some great destructive influence or power. We do not fear God in the sense we fear the atom and hydrogen bombs, but we do fear God, and we respect his authority over us and live in harmony with his will. (c) We stand in awe of his judgment. As teachers, we must give account to God the creator. None of us lives without sin, and the penalty for sin is eternal death and destruction from the presence of God. But God's mercy and grace provide a way for our escape

from that sin. We certainly should reverence God for his mercy and love and stand in awe of his right to judge us in the last day.

4. Honor the King. (a) We honor the king by obeying the laws of the land. In our form of government we have no king, but we do have one who heads the government, the President; and when we obey the laws of our government, we honor the head of the government. (b) We should respect the head of the government, as God's servant. The apostle Paul tells us that the powers that be are the ministers of God for our good. (Rom. 13: 1-7.) (c) We should respect the king for the fact that he is our protector. In many ways we depend upon the government for protection. It protects our right to hold property; it protects our right to come and go as we please. It protects our right to worship as we are told in God's word. For all of this protection we owe the head of our government honor.

### Introduction

Humility means, according to Webster, "the state or quality of being humble in spirit; freedom from pride and arrogance." The synonyms are lowliness and meekness; antonyms are pride, arrogance, conceit, vanity. Humility and the bearing of the fruit of righteousness are associated; they cannot be separated. Someone has said that the limb that stands the straightest on the tree likely has little fruit, but the limb that bends farther toward the ground is likely to be filled with fruit. The weight of the load of fruit which it bears causes the limb to bend toward the ground, while the absence of any fruit will allow the limb to stand erect. So, the individual who bears no fruit of righteousness may make a great show, but that individual who bears the most fruit of righteousness is the most humble and lowly person. Faith-

fulness to God does not mean sinless perfection. One can be faithful and yet not be perfectly sinless. Nor does faithfulness to God mean that a person is doing as much for the Lord as every other person because God does not expect the same amount of service and the same degree of fruit bearing from each individual, owing to their differences in ability. But faithfulness does mean to continue to exercise what ability one has, using the opportunities, which in the providence of God, one is afforded, to accomplish all of God's purposes in that one's life in spite of the trials and temptations which are in the way. One who does less than he is able to do is not faithful; one who gives up before he finishes the course is not faithful. God requires that we be found faithful. (1 Cor. 4: 1, 2.)

### Exposition of the Text

I. Humility Toward One Another (1 Pet. 5: 5-7)

*Likewise, ye younger, be subject unto the elder.* Whether the word elder here refers to officers of the church or simply to aged people cannot be definitely settled. But regardless of which meaning it has,

Peter is teaching young people to respect age. There is a tendency for young people to speak to aged people as they speak to others of their own age. For young people to call aged people by their given names is not showing proper respect, nor should aged people encourage young

people thus to do. Aged people who attempt to put themselves on an equal footing with young people socially will find it impossible to wield an influence over them which they should be able to do.

*All of you gird yourselves with humility.* The Greek word translated *gird* occurs only here in the New Testament. It was the name of an apron worn by slaves, which was tied around them when they worked, to keep their dress clean. The word seems to teach that humility is a garment which must be firmly fastened on and bound closely round us. The association of the slave's apron seems also to suggest that Christians should be ready to submit to the humblest works of charity for others, and to point back to the lowliness of Lord Jesus, when he girded himself, and washed the feet of his apostles." (Pulpit Commentary.) There is a tendency among some church members who live and circulate in the higher brackets of society to overlook and disregard those who cannot afford to live in such society. They would feel that it was not proper for them to associate with the poorer people in the church, that it might hurt their influence in their social clubs if they were to associate too much with the poorer elements of the church. This is in direct violation to the teaching Peter is giving here, and it is also inconsistent with the teaching and the example of Jesus Christ.

*God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.* Peter says that God places himself as if in military array against those who are proud. God marshals all his forces which are necessary to bring down the proud and to give grace to those who are humble and lowly. When we contemplate the omnipotence of God as seen in the creation and preservation of the universe, and when we learn that God marshals his strength against those that are proud, we realize the futility of following the course of pride and the certainty of the fall which comes to them who so walk. (Prov. 16: 18; 29: 23.) Paul's experience with his thorn in the flesh should give us assurance that God will give us grace or favor to the extent needed by the trials and hardships of this life. The reader should study James 4: 5-7 in this

connection. James quotes the same passage from Prov. 3: 34 which Peter uses in this text.

*Humble yourselves therefore.* There are two reasons suggested in this text why we ought to humble ourselves toward one another. The first is that God's mighty hand is against those who are proud. The second reason is that only through humility may we expect to be exalted. "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled; and whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted." (Matt. 23: 12.) Someone has put this idea in this form: "The way up is down." The exaltation which God gives is said to be "in due time." That time may not come as soon as we think it should, but we do not have the degree of wisdom which God possesses. So we ought to be gracious and resigned to God's will and allow him to exalt us when it is safe for us and when it will contribute to his glory.

*Casting all your anxiety upon him.* The Lord cares for his people. Jesus used the lilies of the field and the birds of the air to prove that God cares for us. If God so clothes these things of little value, surely he will care for us who are of greater value. But we should not expect God to extract us from all the embarrassing and hurtful positions and circumstances into which we may bring ourselves by our own folly. God does not promise to preserve us from suffering from our own folly.

II. Faithfulness in Spite of Our Adversary (1 Pet. 5: 8-11)

*Be sober, be watchful.* The word sober, of course, is used usually in connection with strong drink, but in referring to our disposition the word means "serious or subdued in mood, expression, appearance, color, etc.; solemn; grave; sedate." (Webster.) Synonyms for the word are calm, quiet, cool, unimpassioned, serious, somber. The business of overcoming temptation and living faithful Christian lives, performing our work and worship as the Lord directs, is a serious business; and those who approach it lightly, those who are giddy and frivolous in the performance of their duties, will fail to win approval from God.

*Your adversary the devil.* Peter gives this as a reason why we should be sober and watchful. Since the

devil is going about seeking whom he may devour, we feel that all the sobriety and alertness we can possibly command will still fall short of that which is needed to resist the devil. We still need to depend on strength from God. The devil is here called our adversary because he opposes our best interests. He is referred to as the devil because he falsely accuses us. The word *devil* means slanderer, and he is referred to as a lion to indicate the strength which he possesses, and is sometimes referred to as the serpent to denote his cunning and his power to deceive. Some have misunderstood this verse, thinking that Peter said the devil goes about roaring like a lion, and they conclude that he would not be successful any more than a lion would be successful if he roared while attempting to catch his prey. As the lion uses all the cunning of his command, so Satan uses all his subtleties to bring about our destruction.

Whom *withstand stedfast in your faith*. We are told to resist the devil, and he will flee from us. No one can afford to toy with sin; no one can afford to give favorable thought and contemplation to doing wrong. If we hope to succeed in our fight against temptation, we must make a stand at its first appearance. To give way will embolden the adversary and weaken our resistance. Peter indicates that faith is the thing which will make us able to stand firmly in our resistance to temptation. And John tells us that "this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith." (1 John 5: 4b.) Since faith comes by hearing the word of God, and our faith enables us to resist temptation, it follows that the individual who knows little of the word of God will be unable to resist temptation. A knowledge of God's word will not in itself overcome temptation. There must be a desire to do right, but the individual who has no knowledge will not be able to make a successful stand against temptation regardless of his desire.

*The same sufferings are accomplished in your brethren.* Peter wants these Christians of Asia Minor to realize that they are not the only people who are suffering for the name of Christ. There is said to be comfort in knowing that we have company in our sorrows and our hard-

ships. What other people are facing and bearing we can endure.

*And the God of all grace.* Peter points to God as the source and author of all grace, the grace by which we are saved, the grace by which we are established and strengthened and made able to stand; all grace is from God. We are dependent upon this grace since we have neither the wisdom nor the strength to overcome temptation or to provide a way of salvation from the sins which we commit. Hence, Peter points his readers to God as the source of that which is so essential to their salvation. And he reminds them that this God of grace is the one who called us unto his eternal glory in Christ. This glory is said to be in Christ because it is in union with him that we have the promise of being glorified. Those who do not live in union with Christ have no right to expect eternal glory in Christ. But Peter says that we must first suffer for a while before we expect to be glorified with him; and this is in harmony with Paul's statement of the matter when he said, "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him." (Rom. 8: 17.)

*Shall himself perfect, establish, strengthen you.* The word perfect in our text is a term which means to finish, complete, or repair. It was used with reference to fishermen mending their nets. "God will repair, bring to completion, what is lacking in the character of his chosen, if they persevere in prayer, if they are sober and vigilant." (Pulpit Commentary.) The word *establish* is the translation of the Greek word which means to fix, to make fast, or to set. It is used of establishing a person who has to stand against hardships and trials. And the word *strengthen* simply means to give that needed strength in times of trials and temptations.

### III. Exhortations and Salutations (1

Pet. 5:12-14)

*By Silvanus, our faithful brother.* This Silvanus was called Silas in other passages. He was a prophet, and when Paul and Barnabas parted asunder over a difference concerning John Mark, Silas accompanied Paul on the second missionary journey. (Acts 15: 32, 40.) He served Peter

as the bearer of this letter to the brethren of Asia Minor, and it is probable also that he wrote the letter which was dictated by the apostle Peter. Peter commends him as being a faithful brother. If the reader will turn back to the introduction and re-read our definition of faithfulness, he will have a good picture of the character of Silas as suggested in Peter's commendation.

*Exhorting, and testifying.* The word *exhort* means to entreat, to beseech, to admonish, "to urge one to pursue some course of conduct (always prospective, looking to the future, in contrast to the meaning of comfort, which is retrospective, having to do with prior experience)." (Vine.) And the word *testify* means to bear witness to a matter, so Peter was exhorting, urging them to follow a certain course in life and giving his own testimony as to the value of that course of action. And he further testifies that this course of life to which he was exhorting them is the true grace of God. It is in this course of life that the grace of God is to be experienced and enjoyed. And because this course of life is that in which the grace of God is to be enjoyed, he asks them to stand fast therein.

*She that is in Babylon.* There is considerable difference of opinion among Bible scholars as to the identity of this one in Babylon. The King James Version says the church in Babylon, but the word *church* is in italics, indicating there is nothing in the original to support it. Consequently, we would reject that interpretation of the verse. Since this woman in Babylon is mentioned with Mark, an individual, we would nat-

urally conclude that this must be some Christian woman. Furthermore, since Peter is sending the salutation of this woman to people in Asia Minor, we conclude that this woman is known to the brethren in Asia Minor. And since Peter had preached in Asia Minor among the people to whom he is writing, and since his wife is known to have accompanied on his missionary journeys (1 Cor. 9: 5), we naturally conclude that this reference is most probably to Peter's wife. Again, the word Babylon is thought by many to refer to Rome, and they consider this verse as proof that Peter was in Rome. But since there is no evidence in the New Testament that Peter was in Rome, and since the term Babylon refers to an apostate condition, and Rome was not yet in that condition, we conclude that the term Babylon was not at that time used with reference to Rome. True, John used the term with reference to the degenerate state of the church in Rome, but John wrote more than thirty years after Peter wrote this epistle, and his book is filled with symbols and figurative language. There is no reason to conclude that Peter at this early date used the word Babylon in such a figurative way as John used it at a later date.

*Salute one another with a kiss of love.* This was the customary manner of greeting in the time when Peter wrote. Paul exhorted the brethren to do the same. (1 Cor. 16: 20; 2 Cor. 13: 12.) The apostles did not command the use of a kiss as a means of greeting; they simply exhorted brethren to keep the common custom of the day free from sensuality and impurity.

### Lessons to Learn

1. Humility is essential to Christlikeness. Christlikeness is essential to salvation; Christlikeness is learned only from the revealed word of God. Hence, the necessity of studying God's word that we may know the character of Christ, that we may cultivate the likeness to him that we may have eternal life.

2. Faithfulness is essential to eternal life. God nowhere promises to keep the unfaithful in time of trial

or to save them at the coming of Christ.

3. Those who follow the teaching of the apostles have the assurance of inspiration that their course of life is the true grace of God. They also have Peter's assurance that God will perfect, establish, and strengthen them in that course of life if they are humble and faithful and dependent upon God.

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 said in our lesson about man's relation to God?  
 What is said of the value of man?  
 What lessons do we learn from the incarnation and resurrection of Christ?  
 What is said of the necessity of love for the brethren?  
 What opportunity does the church afford us in this connection?  
 State and discuss three lessons suggested concerning our fear of God.  
 How do we honor the head of our government?  
 State and discuss reasons why we should respect the government.

Introduction

State and discuss the meaning of humility.  
 What is the connection between humility and bearing the fruit of righteousness?  
 What is meant by faithfulness to God?  
 Does faithfulness include sinless perfection?  
 What is said of the necessity of our being faithful?

Humility Toward One Another

What is said of the proper attitude of young people toward old people?  
 What lesson is suggested by girding ourselves with humility?  
 Describe a situation in which church members may be guilty of a lack of humility.

What is God's attitude toward the proud and toward the humble?  
 Give two reasons why we should humble ourselves toward God.  
 What is said of our disposition of our anxiety?  
 Faithfulness in Spite of Our Adversary  
 What is the meaning of the word sober in this text?  
 Who is our adversary?  
 What does the word *devil* mean?  
 Wherein is the danger of toying with sin?  
 Through what are we assured victory over sin?  
 Can you show an essential connection between knowledge of God's word and the power to overcome temptation?  
 Of what does Peter say that God is the source?  
 Unto what has God called us in Christ?  
 What three things does Peter promise that God will do for us?

Exhortations and Salutations

What do you know of Silvanus and his connections with Peter and Paul?  
 What is the meaning of the word *exhort* and the word *testify*?  
 Does the expression "she that is in Babylon" refer to the church in Babylon? Why?  
 If this expression refers to a woman, who was she?  
 How did the brethren of Asia Minor salute one another?  
 How did Peter regulate this salutation?  
 What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

Lesson XI—December 16, 1956

THE CHRISTIAN GRACES

Lesson Text

1 Si-mon Peter, a ser-vant and apostle of Je'-sus Christ to them that have obtained a like precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God and the Saviour Je'-sus Christ:

2 Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Je'-sus our Lord;

3 Seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue:

4 Whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust.

5 Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue: and in *your* virtue knowledge;

1: 16 And in *your* knowledge self-control; and in *your* self-control patience; and in *your* patience godliness;

7 And in *your* godliness brotherly kindness; and in *your* brotherly kindness love.

8 For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Je'-sus Christ.

9 For he that lacketh these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins.

10 Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble:

11 For thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Je'-sus Christ.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"For if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble." (2 Pet. 1: 10b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Pet. 1: 12-21.

### Daily Bible Readings

December 10.	M	.....	Virtue (Phil. 4: 1-9)
December 11.	T	.....	Knowledge (Col. 2: 1-5)
December 12.	W	.....	Self-control (Acts 24: 24-27)
December 13.	T	.....	Patience (James 5: 7-11)
December 14.	F	.....	Godliness (1 Tim. 4: 1-8)
December 15.	S	.....	Brotherly Kindness (Rom. 12: 9-21)
December 16.	S	.....	Love (1 John 3: 13-24)

TIME.—A.D. 60-64.

PLACE.—Babylon.

PERSONS.—Peter and the saints in Asia Minor.

### Golden Text Explained

1. Eternal life is conditional, (a) On God's ability to preserve us. All who believe in God and have sufficient knowledge of the scriptures to have just ideas of his omnipotence and omniscience believe confidently that God is able to preserve us from falling. We are told by inspiration that he "is able to guard you from stumbling, and to set you before the presence of his glory without blemish in exceeding joy," (Jude 24.) Again, we are told that Jesus "is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. 7: 25.) And once more we read, "Yea, he shall be made to stand; for the Lord hath power to make him stand." (Rom. 14: 4.) So if God is the only one concerned in whether we stand or fall, we can rest assured that all will stand against whatever temptations may come, for God has power to make us stand. Not only does he have the power to do so, but he loves us enough to cause him to exercise that power in our behalf. Paul argues that if God loved us enough while we were sinners to give his Son to die for us, "much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him." (Rom. 5: 8, 9.) (b) On our obedience. Not only is our standing against temptation conditional upon the power and love of God to make us stand, but it is also conditioned upon our obedience to God's commands, our willingness to do what God commands us to do. We are told that the Lord "became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation." (Heb.

5: 9.) From this passage we learn that God exercises his power and love to make the obedient people stand, to keep them from stumbling. Our text says, "If ye do these things, ye shall never stumble." (1) Paul says, "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." (Eph. 6: 11.) If an individual refuses or neglects to put on the armor of God, will he be able to stand against the wiles of the devil? If through disobedience or neglect, one refuses to use the armor which God provides, God is not bound by his promises to keep that individual from stumbling. (2) Paul says, "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." (Rom. 8: 13.) From this we learn that we must put to death the deeds of the body in order to have eternal life. If we neglect or refuse to obey God in putting to death the deeds of the body, God is not obligated by his promises to make us stand or keep us from stumbling. (3) Paul gives in detail the works of the flesh and says, "Of which I forewarn you even as I did forewarn you, that they who practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (Gal. 5: 21.) In this we see the necessity of refraining from the works of the flesh. If one through neglect or disobedience does not obey this teaching, but practices the works of the flesh, that one is not entitled to claim the promise of God to make him stand. (4) We must continue to believe; we must keep the faith. Since eternal life is conditioned upon our obedience and we are commanded to continue to

believe in God and to keep the faith, it follows that if we cease to believe we will cease to enjoy the promises of God to the believer. Jesus tells us that there are some who receive the word with joy and "who for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away." (Luke 8: 13.) When people fall away from the faith, they cease to be among those whom God promises to keep from stumbling. The apostle Paul tells us that people who refuse to take care of their own have denied the faith and are worse than unbelievers. (1 Tim. 5: 8.) When an individual does that, he ceases to be in that class whom the Lord promises to make stand. And again, Paul predicted that in later times some would fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons. (1 Tim. 4: 1.) When people fall away from the faith through accepting and following false doctrines, they become disobedient to God and are not any longer of the class whom God promises to keep from stumbling.

2. God's promises are to the obedient, (a) Jesus tells us that his sheep hear his voice and follow him, and he gives them eternal life, "and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who hath given them unto me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand." (John 10: 28, 29.)

In this passage Jesus promises that God will keep all that have been given to him, but this too is conditioned upon the obedience of those who are given to him. For we read of Jesus' speaking of those whom the Father had given him, saying, "While I was with them, I kept them in thy name which thou hast given me; and I guarded them, and not one of them perished, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled." (John 17: 12.) Here we find an example of one's being given to Jesus. He is one of those whom no one is able to snatch out of the Father's hand, yet he was lost. Was he lost because someone was able to snatch him out of the Father's hand? No, he was lost because of his disobedience. No one can take an *obedient* person from the Lord, but an individual through *disobedience* can sever his relationship with the Lord. (b) Paul tells us that the Lord is faithful and will guard us from the evil one. (2 Thess. 3: 3.) And yet, we find in the case of the Laodiceans that, on account of their lukewarmness, the Lord would spew them out of his mouth. (Rev. 3: 15.) No one was able to snatch the Laodiceans out of the hand of the Father as long as they were obedient, but when they became lukewarm (disobedient), they put themselves in a position to be rejected by the Lord.

### Introduction

There are certain metals which shine more brightly the more they are polished. The more one rubs and polishes them, the more brightly they shine. So the Christian graces will shine more brightly with exercise. If they are left unused and unexercised, they will not shine brightly. They are not keepsakes to be put away and kept in the trunk until some kind of sentimental emotion causes us to bring them out to view; nor are they antiques to be placed on a shelf and viewed when visitors come to see us. They are practical, everyday qualities which shine more brightly with constant

use. There is no danger of their wearing out or being weakened through constant use. They gather both strength and beauty by continued use. As flowers beautify a room and rare jewels enhance the beauty of a garment, so these Christian graces adorn the character that wears them. They are not obtained by birth, money, or social prominence. They can be had only through much prayer, suffering of hardships, and patient cultivation. Their value cannot be determined in dollars, but at the gate of heaven they can be exchanged for eternal felicity, worth more than we possibly imagine.

### Exposition of the Text

I. God's Gracious Grant Through Knowledge (2 Pet 1: 1-4)

*Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ.* Here we have the

apostle's salutation to the people of Asia Minor. Though the people to whom this is addressed are not mentioned here, this is a second letter

which he is writing to these people. (2 Pet. 3: 1, 2.) Since this is the second letter addressed to these people, and the first letter is addressed to the Christians of several provinces in Asia Minor, we know that this one is addressed to the same people.

*Have obtained a like precious faith with us.* Peter addresses people who have obtained faith, and he says that this faith is like the faith which he and others had obtained. Furthermore, he says that this is a precious faith, and it is faith in the righteousness of God and of Jesus Christ. The people to whom Peter wrote were largely Gentile, and Peter is saying that they as Gentiles had obtained a like precious faith with Jews and that the righteousness of God is surely manifested in granting faith to Jews and Gentiles alike.

*Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God.* The favors of God and the peace which passeth understanding and which can be enjoyed only by those who put their trust in God are to be multiplied to us through a knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ. The Greek word for knowledge here is a stronger term than the usual one. "It means knowledge directed toward an object, gradually approaching nearer and nearer to it, concentrated upon it, fixed closely upon it. So it comes to mean the knowledge, not merely of intellectual comprehension, but rather of deep contemplation; the knowledge which implies love—for only love can concentrate continually the powers of the soul in close meditation upon its object." (Pulpit Commentary.) So the grace of God and genuine spiritual peace are multiplied to us, not through the accumulation of a great number of Biblical facts but through deep contemplation of the character of God and of the person of Jesus Christ as revealed to us through the scriptures and a genuine love which concentrates all the powers of the converted soul upon the object of its devotion.

*His divine power hath granted unto us all things.* Peter tells us that God has given to us everything that pertains to life and godliness. The word *life* here means spiritual life, and *godliness* is that godlike character, and so we conclude that God has given us everything essential to

the generation and growth of spiritual life and everything that is necessary to direct us in the way of godly living. Then he continues by telling us that these things come to us through a knowledge of him that calls us by his own glory and virtue. Peter emphasizes repeatedly the necessity and the value of a knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ. This should impress us with the necessity of continued study and deep meditation on the word of God.

*By his own glory and virtue.* His glory is the sum total of all his glorious attributes. The word *virtue* is rather difficult in this connection. It is a translation of a Greek word which means "whatever procures preeminent estimation for a person or thing; hence, intrinsic eminence, moral goodness, virtue." (Vine.) The glory and virtue of God and of his Son Jesus Christ are revealed to us in the gospel, and these are the things that give the gospel its drawing, inviting power.

*Whereby he hath granted unto us.* Through God's glory and virtue have been given to us great promises, exceeding great promises. And these promises are said to be precious; they are of inestimable value. Their value or preciousness lies in the fact that in them, or through the fulfillment of them, we become partakers of the nature of God. Man was created in the likeness of God. Through sin that likeness was greatly marred. But in our rebirth that likeness is restored, and since we are begotten again through the incorruptible seed, the gospel of Christ (1 Pet. 1: 22, 23), we see how we become partakers of the nature of God through the promises revealed to us through his word.

*Having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust.* One cannot become a partaker of the divine nature until he has escaped from the corruption here mentioned. This corruption is in the world, and it works through our lust.

II. *Graces That Make Us Fruitful*  
(2 Pet. 1: 5-8)

*And for this very cause.* Because God has given us such precious and exceeding great promises through which we become partakers of the divine nature, we should for this cause give more diligence to our part. The provisions God has made for our

salvation are so great as to stimulate us to greater exertion rather than to be negligent concerning our duty.

*Adding on your part all diligence.* This is that to which we should be stimulated, all diligence in doing the things which God expects of us. The words "adding on your part" are the translation of one Greek word which means literally "bringing in by the side." Verses two, three, and four tell us what God has done for our salvation; Peter now tells us what we are to bring in along by the side of that which God has contributed. Diligence is that which we are to contribute, diligence in supplying the Christian graces.

*In your faith supply virtue.* Faith is the first and fundamental thing in the Christian character. Without faith we cannot please God. (Heb. 11: 6.) We walk by faith (2 Cor. 5: 7.) Through faith we become Christians, but it is not enough simply to become a Christian. One must add to that faith the manifestation of the likeness of Jesus Christ. This likeness is found in the graces which we are to add to our faith. The origin and meaning of the Greek word translated "supply" are both interesting and instructive. "Originally it meant to found and support a chorus, to lead a choir, to keep in tune, and then, to supply or provide. As here used, the graces which adorn the Christian's character are to be chorused into a grand symphony, to the delight and pleasure of him who fashioned and made us for his own good pleasure. It will be seen that there are eight of the graces, and that they thus form an octave of the soul-tones, the first being faith, the last love, an octave higher. When these are harmonized and played on by the divine Spirit, disharmony disappears and life's discords vanish. How we should rejoice that we have been privileged to provide such an instrument in the hand of our God!" (Woods.) The word *virtue* in this text means Christian manliness and active courage in fighting the good fight of faith. Faith which is not well supplied by this courage and Christian manliness to activate it will not be very valuable.

*And in your virtue knowledge.* Virtue is of little value without knowledge to guide it. There is a connection between all of these

Christian graces, the one depending on the other. As faith without courage is rather helpless, so the courage or virtue without knowledge to guide it in the right direction might even be destructive.

*In your knowledge self-control.* There must be self-control even of the knowledge which guides our courage. We must be sober, thoughtful, able to direct our own mental energies, meditation, motives, and purposes if we expect to live in harmony with God's laws. Self-control is to bring all our appetites, desires, and passions into harmony with the will of the Lord as expressed in his revealed word.

*In your self-control patience.* Patience is not mere stoicism, but a willing, steadfast submission to the will of God and to the providence of God in ever-changing conditions and circumstances.

*And in your patience godliness.* The word *godliness* is an all-inclusive term. It means God-likeness. And to be godlike is to follow the teaching and example of our Lord who was God manifest in the flesh.

*And in your godliness brotherly kindness.* Brotherly kindness suggests our relationship to one another and to God. Being brethren, we are all equally related to God. Consequently, we should treat each other with that kindness and consideration which one brother deserves from another.

*In your brotherly kindness love.* Like Paul, Peter puts love at the summit of all these Christian graces. Beginning with faith as the foundation, he ends with love as the capstone in this building of Christian character. Since the word is not limited by any statement in the text, we take it to mean love for God, love for our fellow man, even love for our enemies, love for anything and everything which God loves.

*For if these things are yours and abound.* Peter suggests that not only should we possess these graces, but they should *abound* in us. He further promises us that if they abound in us we will be fruitful and active unto the knowledge of Jesus Christ. "The various graces of the Christian character, realized in the heart, will lead us on to that fuller knowledge of Christ; if they are really ours, they will not allow us to be idle, they

must bring forth the fruit of good works; and the life of righteousness by faith draws the Christian onward in the knowledge of Christ." (Pulpit Commentary.)

### III. Exhortation and Promise (2 Pet 1: 9-11)

*For he that lacketh these things is blind.* The word *blind* is to be taken in a limited sense, being limited by the phrase which follows, "seeing only what is near." Those who lack these Christian graces are shortsighted, seeing only the things of the earth. They are worldly in their views; they appreciate things temporal and worldly more than they appreciate the things that are heavenly. Appreciation of things heavenly requires farsightedness, while appreciation of things earthly requires only shortsightedness. And as a result of the lack of these Christian graces and the resulting shortsightedness, the individual lives as if he had never been cleansed from those sins. Peter expresses it as "having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins." Peter does not mean to say that the individual actually forgets that he ever obeyed the gospel, but lacking these Christian graces, he lives like one would live who has never obeyed the gospel. In these words Peter warns us not to neglect the cultivation of these graces.

*Give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure.* In these words Peter exhorts us to greater care and concern for our eternal welfare. Our calling came when we accepted the invitation of

Christ, under the preaching of the gospel, to render obedience to Christ. We are called through the preaching of the gospel. (2 Thess. 2: 14.) Our election refers to God's choice of us in consequence of our having accepted his call through the gospel. To make our calling and election sure is to make certain that our calling was not in vain and that our election is made permanent. And we make our calling and election sure by the cultivation of these Christian graces, for Peter says if we do these things, that is if we cultivate these graces and are diligent in that cultivation, we shall never stumble.

*Shall be richly supplied unto you.* This is the promise which we have in this section of our text, that on the condition we cultivate these graces and through that cultivation make our calling and election sure, God will richly supply unto us an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord. God does not do things halfheartedly or in short measure. The entrance which will be given us is a rich, full abundant entrance. The kingdom is said to be eternal; we are now in the kingdom. The kingdom in which we are citizens will never be destroyed; it is an eternal kingdom. But Jesus will not always be the king in this kingdom, for he will deliver up the kingdom to God the Father. (1 Cor. 15: 24-28.) It is spoken of here as the kingdom of Jesus Christ because he established it and developed it by bringing citizens into it.

### Lessons to Learn

1. Peter emphasizes the importance and necessity of knowledge, (a) Grace and peace are supplied through the knowledge of God. (b) All things essential to life and godliness are given us through that knowledge. (c) Promises through which we partake of the divine nature are revealed through our knowledge of him.

2. God's contribution to our salvation exceeds in value that which we make but is no more essential to our salvation. We must add our part if we hope to go to heaven.

3. The reward for the little contribution that we make is such that it should encourage every Christian to use all diligence steadfastly to the end of the way to do whatever God requires of him.

### 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 said of God's ability to preserve us and keep us from falling?

What is said of our obedience as a condition of our being kept from falling?  
What does the armor of God have to do with our remaining faithful?

What is said of our duty to put to death the deeds of the body?

On what condition are we promised an entrance into the kingdom of God?

What is the connection between belief and eternal salvation?  
 What promise is made to the sheep of Jesus?  
 Can you prove that Jesus ever lost one of his sheep?  
 Why was the church at Laodicea in danger of falling away from God?

Introduction

What is necessary to make our Christian graces shine brightly?  
 What two things do Christian graces gather by continued use?  
 What human values are of no use in obtaining Christian graces?  
 How are these Christian graces attained and cultivated?

God's Gracious Grant Through Knowledge  
 To whom is Peter's second epistle addressed?

What had these people attained which was in common with what Peter had attained?

What two things are multiplied to us in the knowledge of God?

What do you know of the particular word for knowledge which Peter used here?

What has been granted to us by his divine power?

What is meant by the word *glory* and the word *virtue* in this verse?

What has been granted to us through God's glory and virtue?

Through what does the corruption that is in the world work?

How do we escape from this corruption that is in the world?

Graces That Make Us Fruitful  
 What is suggested by the phrase "adding on your part"?

In what way is our contribution of diligence to be manifested?

What is the place of faith among the Christian graces?

What is meant by virtue as used in this text?

What place does knowledge of God's word have among Christian graces?

What is the benefit of self-control in the Christian life?

What is the meaning of patience?  
 What does the word *godliness* include?

What is suggested in brotherly kindness?  
 What place does love occupy among the Christian graces?

What is said of the extent these graces are to be cultivated by us?

What does Peter say these graces will do for those who cultivate them?

Exhortation and Promise

What is said of the person who lacks these graces?

What do you know of the manner in which we are called of God?

What do you know of the election of the saints?

How can we make our calling and election sure?

What blessing is promised to those who cultivate these graces?

Why is this kingdom called the kingdom of Christ? Why everlasting?

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

Lesson XII—December 23, 1956

THE DESTINY OF THE WICKED

Lesson Text

<sup>2</sup> Pet. 2: 4-9, 15-22

4 For if God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;

5 And spared not the ancient world, but preserved Noah with seven others, a preacher of righteousness, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;

6 And turning the cities of S6d'-6m and G 6 - m 6 r' - rah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, having made them an example unto those that should live ungodly;

7 And delivered righteous Lot, sore distressed by the lascivious life of the wicked

8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their lawless deeds):

9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to

keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment;

15 Forsaking the right way, they went astray, having followed the way of Ba'-laam the son of Be'-6r, who loved the hire of wrong-doing;

16 But he was rebuked for his own transgression: a dumb ass spake with man's voice and stayed the madness of the prophet.

17 These are springs without water, and mists driven by a storm; for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved.

18 For, uttering great swelling words of vanity, they entice in the lusts of the flesh, by lasciviousness, those who are just escaping from them that live in error;

19 Promising them liberty, while they themselves are bondservants of corruption; for of whom a man is

overcome, of the same is he also brought into bondage.

20 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Je'-sus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the last state is become worse with them than the first.

21 For it were better for them not

to have known the way of righteousness, than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

22 It has happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog turning to his own vomit again, and the sow that had washed to wallowing in the mire.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Forsaking the right way, they went astray."* (2 Pet. 2: 15.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Pet. 2: 1-3, 10-14.

### Daily Bible Readings

December 17.	M.	Wicked Turned into Sheol (Psalm 9: 1-17)
December 18.	T.	God Angry with the Wicked (Psalm 7: 1-11)
December 19.	W.	Plotting of the Wicked (Psalm 37: 1-12)
December 20.	T.	Wicked Separated from God (Matt. 13: 47-50)
December 21.	F.	Wicked to Be Put Away (1 Cor. 5: 1-13)
December 22.	S.	Destruction to the Wicked (Job 31: 1-3)
December 23.	S.	End of the Wicked (Psalm 37: 28-38)

TIME.—A.D. 60-64.

PLACE.—Babylon.

PERSONS.—Peter and the saints of Asia Minor.

### Golden Text Explained

1. One can forsake the right way. (a) Jesus so taught. Jesus said that in the last days many false prophets shall arise and lead many astray, and because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of many shall wax cold, but he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved. (Matt. 24 11-13.) Those who are led astray by false prophets are among those who forsake the right way, and those whose love waxes cold and who become lukewarm and indifferent in their service are also among those who forsake the right way. Again, Jesus says that there are some who for a while believe but in time of temptation fall away, and others who, as they go on their way, are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life and bring no fruit to perfection. (Luke 8: 13, 14.) These who for a while believe but in time of temptation fall away are among those who forsake the right way. And those who allow the riches and pleasures of this life to lead them into unfruitfulness are among those who forsake the right way. And again we find our Lord picturing the judgment scene and saying that there will be some in the judgment who will be put on the left hand because they failed to feed him when he was

hungry, give him drink when he was thirsty, clothe him when he was naked, or visit him when he was in prison. They failed to do this in the person of his followers, and on account of this will go away into everlasting punishment. Certainly these will go into punishment because they forsook the right way. (b) Judas did so. Not only does Jesus teach that it is possible for one to forsake the right way, but we actually have an example of one who did forsake that way in the person of Judas. He became a disciple and an apostle of the Lord; he was among the number whom the Father gave unto the Son, (John 17: 12.) But in spite of the fact that he was given by the Father unto the Son, he fell and went to perdition. (Acts 1: 25.) Since he was the son of perdition, his home place to which we are told he went must be perdition. (c) The Laodiceans forsook the right way. They must have been in the right way at one time because they were a church of the Lord. Furthermore, they are called on to repent and return to their first work. If they had never been in the right way, they would never have been called on to return to the right way.

2. Ways in which people have gone

astray, (a) Reveling in the daytime. The apostle gives us in the context of our golden text the manner in which the people under consideration went astray. The first one mentioned is their willingness to indulge in their sins in the daytime. The nighttime was for reveling and carousing, but these people had become so bold and shameless in their revelings that they continued in the daytime. So here we learn of people who had once been in the right way, but they had so far forsaken that way that they could without a sense of shame revel in the daytime, (b) They practiced deceit. They had once known the way of truth, honor, and right, but now they were practicing deceit, even reveling in their deceiving while they partook of love feasts and fellowship of the saints. This expresses hypocrisy in its greatest degree, (c) Eyes full of adultery. These were people who once knew what clean moral living meant. But they had gone astray to the extent that now their eyes are full of adultery, meaning that their minds are filled with lust and passion, (d) Enticing others to sin. These are no longer satisfied to indulge in sin by themselves or secretly, but they are open with their

sins and continually enticing others to participate in sin with them, (e) Trained in covetousness. Peter expresses the thought in these words: "having a heart exercised in covetousness." Their heart was exercised or trained by long use in the art of coveting. Peter says that these had followed the way of Balaam and consequently had gone astray. Balaam was the prophet whom the king of Moab hired to curse the people of God. (Num. 22: 2ff.) Balaam coveted the reward which Balak offered so much that he would have cursed the people of God if God had given him a curse to deliver. But, being unable to deliver the curse, he suggested to Balak how he could lead the people into sin so that God would destroy them. (Num. 31: 16.) So Peter speaks of some in his day who had followed the way of Balaam, and in doing so had forsaken the right way. In all of these we see the ways in which good, sincere, earnest people may forsake the right way. These people whom Peter described did not forsake the right way in a day or a week; it was a matter of growth, gradually going farther and farther into sin until they had reached that degree which is described in this context.

### Introduction

The Bible so clearly teaches in so many places that it is unnecessary to give references that the unbeliever, the disobedient, the wicked will be punished in hell. Yet there are many people who refuse to believe it on the ground that such a course is inconsistent with the character of God. They think it impossible for a God of love, mercy, pity, and compassion to punish his creatures, his offspring, in the way described in the word of God. There seem to be but three positions to which men may possibly hold in this matter, (a) That punishment in due measure will be meted out to all who are unprepared to live in heaven. (b) That God will not do what he says he will do, that he simply was not truthful in picturing the final, eternal conse-

quences of sin. (c) That the Holy Spirit in describing the consequences of sin used words contrary to their usual, commonly accepted meaning. Accordingly, the expression "everlasting punishment" means something exactly opposite to what that term usually means. The writer is aware of the fact that such position would involve the Holy Spirit in deception and so is unthinkable, but it is no more unthinkable than the second position that God simply did not tell the truth with reference to the consequence of sin. It follows that the only sensible solution of the matter is that God will do just what he says he will do, and the wicked will be punished in that measure which the wisdom of God and the extent of their sins demand.

### Exposition of the Text

I. God Knows How to Punish and Reward (2 Pet. 2: 4-9)

For if God spared not angels when they sinned. Peter starts his argu-

ment to prove that God knows how to punish the disobedient and to reward the faithful. His first example is that of angels. Angels were not

created unholy and sinful; they fell from the plane of holiness on which they were created. "And angels that kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, he hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." (Jude 6.) From this we learn that angels fell from that plane on which they were placed in creation. Peter tells us that their sin was the cause of their being cast down to hell. The Greek word for hell occurs only here in the New Testament. According to the Greek idea, this was the place for punishment of evil spirits. Peter used the word with no indication that he intended a change in meaning. Consequently, we conclude that this is the place of punishment for wicked spirits up to the time of the judgment. But Peter's use of the falling of the angels is that if God did not spare the angels when they sinned, certainly he will not spare us if we continue to live in sin.

*And spared not the ancient world.* This is the second case which Peter brings up to prove that God will not allow sin to go unpunished. He did not spare the ancient world in the time of Noah. We are told that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was evil continually so that it repented Jehovah that he had made man and grieved him at his heart. So he warned Noah to build an ark for the salvation of himself and family, and the rest of the world was to be destroyed. (Gen. 6: 1ff.) The ancient world was destroyed because of its sin, but Noah and his family were preserved because of their righteousness. This is offered in proof of the fact that God knows how to punish the wicked and reward the righteous.

*Turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes.* Peter gives this as the third point in proof of his assertion that God will punish the wicked and reward the righteous. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire and brimstone. (Gen 19: 23ff.) These cities were destroyed because they were so exceedingly sinful that not even ten righteous people could be found therein. And Peter says that their destruction is to serve as an example to all who would live ungodly. This could mean nothing other than that

those who choose to live as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah lived may expect to receive punishment similar to that received by the people of these cities.

*And delivered righteous Lot.* Lot is called a righteous man. He lived for about sixteen years in Sodom and was able to maintain his righteousness in spite of his wicked environment. We are told that Lot was sore distressed by the lascivious life of the wicked. Had it not been for this attitude toward wickedness, Lot might have fallen because of his life in that environment. Our security in sinful environment depends upon our attitude toward that sinful conduct about us. If it is appealing to us and we desire to indulge in it, we will not likely hold out faithful against such desires. But if the sin with which we are surrounded is repulsive, if we abhor it with all our souls, we will not be injured by it.

*Vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their lawless deeds.* Some have the mistaken idea that Peter said Lot's righteous soul was vexed from day to day, but the word "vexed" is active voice instead of passive voice. It is easy to see how Lot would be vexed with the ungodliness of his neighbors (which thought is expressed in verse seven, but it is difficult to understand the meaning of Lot's vexing his soul with their unlawful deeds. One wonders if Peter does not mean to say that Lot reproached himself daily for leaving the pure, spiritual company of Abraham and coming to the well-watered plain of the Jordan where he was forced to endure the company of the coarse, vulgar Sodomites.

*The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly.* Peter has now reached the conclusion of the argument which began in verse four. If God did not spare angels, neither spared the ancient world nor the cities of Sodom or Gomorrah for their sins; and if God preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and righteous Lot on account of his righteous living among sinful people, Peter concludes that the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation and to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment. This suggests that the unrighteous are now enduring punishment. This punishment begins immediately after death and

continues in this intermediate state until the judgment. (Luke 16: 19ff.)  
 II. Description of the Wicked (2 Pet. 2: 15-19)

*Having followed the way of Balaam.* Peter describes at some length certain kinds of wickedness which were practiced by people of his day and gives this as an illustration of those who have forsaken the right way. And he says that they followed the way of Balaam in their sins. Balaam was that prophet of God who lived in the east around Babylon perhaps, but was called by Balak, king of Moab, to curse the people of Israel encamped on the eastern side of Jordan. Here we are told that Balaam loved the hire of wrongdoing. He was one of those men who did not wish to do wrong, but he loved money so much that he would do wrong in order to satisfy his desire. But Peter tells us that Balaam was reproved for his wrongdoing. The dumb ass, speaking in a man's voice, reproved Balaam, (Num. 22: 21ff.) Here we have the stamp of inspiration put upon this Old Testament story. There are many who profess to believe the Bible to be the word of God, but they want to strike out everything that is miraculous. They would not accept as true the story that Balaam's ass reproved the prophet; but Peter puts the stamp of approval of the Holy Spirit upon that story when he, moved by the Holy Spirit, says Balaam was reproved by the speech of the ass.

*These are springs without water.* Here is the first figure of speech which Peter uses in a series of such to describe these false teachers who have forsaken the right way on account of their love of money. A spring without water suggests hypocrisy, professing to be something when one is not. One approaching a spring or a well where he expects to slake his thirst and finds no water will be disappointed, so those who expected to hear saving truth from these apostates would be sorely disappointed. They are further described as mists driven by a storm. Again we see the promise of bountiful rain but receive only mist. For all such the blackness of darkness is reserved as their punishment.

For, *uttering great swelling words of vanity.* This suggests the pride

and the surety with which these speakers delivered their empty, vain lessons. But instead of these lessons slaking the spiritual thirst of the weary or furnishing the rains which would mature the grain, they enticed through the lusts of the flesh those who were just escaping from error. Instead of their words bringing life and salvation, they brought death and destruction. They promised equal liberty, but being themselves bond servants of corruption, they could do nothing more than bring those whom they influenced under bondage to the same corruption. There are teachers today who promise men salvation and freedom from sin on terms other than those revealed in the gospel. The net result is that they lead their hearers farther and farther into the chains of sin and spiritual corruption.

III. The Miserable State of the Wicked Illustrated (2 Pet. 2: 20-22)

*After they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord.* Peter in this verse teaches us that we escape the defilement of the world through the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord. Peter has had much to say in this letter about knowledge. (a) We learn that grace and peace are multiplied through the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and that all things essential to life and godliness are supplied through the knowledge of Jesus Christ. And now he says we escape from the defilements of sin through knowledge of the Lord. (b) We should learn from this also that the world has a defiling influence on people. The world with its philosophies, its moral standards, and its ever-increasing invitation to indulge in pleasures can result in but one thing, and that is the defilement of the soul which only the blood of Jesus Christ can remove.

*Are again entangled therein and overcome.* From this we learn that it is possible for one who has escaped from the defilement of the world through the knowledge of Jesus Christ to become entangled in worldly things to the extent that he is overcome by them. There are those who believe in the impossibility of apostasy, saying that the child of God can never so sin as to be finally lost. But in this passage Peter

teaches that one who has escaped the defilements of the world, or has been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ, can become entangled in the world's defilements again and be overcome by them.

*The last state is become worse with them than the first.* Peter says that, when one has fallen from grace, this fallen state is worse than the state in which he lived before he obeyed the gospel. A fallen, apostate child of God is in worse condition than one who has never become a child of God. This fallen state is worse than the first (a) because they have sinned against light. Having been once enlightened by the word of God, and having been cleansed from the defilements of sin, they go back into their former lusts and sinful habits, knowing the condemnation that awaits them, (b) Because they have yielded to the tempter. Every time one yields to temptation, his resistance has been weakened, and when one gives up to that extent that he becomes entangled in sin and overcome by it, his resistance is so weakened that it is difficult ever to repair it sufficiently to stand. (c) This latter state is worse than the first in that it brings shame and reproach upon the church of the Lord. When one has been for a while a faithful member of the church and then becomes entangled in sin, the church suffers shame and reproach. (d) When people have a preference for sin, God gives them up to do the things which are not befitting. (Rom. 1: 24, 26-28.)

*For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness.* Since this fallen, apostate state is worse than the first, it is obviously better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandments delivered to them. It will be harder for them to live right after having given over to temptation so far as to become entangled in it again. To know the way of righteousness means to have saving knowledge of God and to walk in the ways that are right according to God's standards. In this verse we have positive proof that those who

have known the way of righteousness can turn back therefrom, be entangled in the ways of sin and the defilement of the world and be in worse condition than they were before they became Christians.

*It has happened unto them according to the true proverb.* Peter now uses two proverbs to illustrate the fallen condition of these who turned back from the commandment delivered to them. The first is that of the dog returning to his vomit. After ejecting that which was unfit for his physical use and being free from its harmful influences, the dog returned and takes it within his body again. So a person may through a knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ be free from sin and its soul-destroying influences, but may return to take it within his bosom again, only to be destroyed by it. The second proverb is that of a sow that had washed but returned to wallowing in the mire. After washing herself, the sow was free from filth for a time, but she returned to the mire and became filthy again. The application of the proverb is that a person may through obedience to the gospel and by the power of the blood of Christ become free from sin and continue in that freedom for a while, but turn back to sin and become so defiled that he will be lost. The advocates of the impossibility of apostasy tell us that the nature of the dog was not changed when he vomited, nor was the nature of the sow changed when she washed. Are they now ready for the only sensible conclusion to this argument? Here it is: that the nature of a sinner is in no way changed when he becomes a child of God. The change of nature is not the point under consideration. Peter argues that a dog freed himself from that which troubled him, but returned and took it to his system again. The sow was freed from her filth, but returned to the mire and contracted filth again. The application is that a person becomes free of sin and then after remaining free for a while becomes entangled and defiled by that sin again.

### Lessons to Learn

1. God is no respecter of persons. Social standing or great wealth cannot sway God's purpose to punish the disobedient. The fact that one did not intend to live and die in sin will not move God to change the rules.

2. Not only will false teachers be lost, but those who are promised liberty by them and led into further bondage to sin will also be lost.

3. If the state of the apostate is worse than his first state, will not his punishment be greater than if he had never obeyed the gospel? To be in hell is beyond our ability to comprehend, but to be there as an apostate who disgraced the church of our Lord and led others astray must be worse.

### 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
- Explain the teaching of Jesus on how and why people forsake the right way.
- Who among the disciples of Jesus forsook the right way?
- Can you show that Judas was among those that were given to Jesus?
- What church among the churches of Asia forsook the right way?
- What degree of ungodliness is suggested by reveling in the daytime?
- How did the people to whom Peter referred practice deceit?
- What is meant by having eyes full of adultery?
- What is meant by being trained in covetousness?
- From reading this lesson, can you point out two sins of which Balaam was guilty?
- What is the danger of allowing little departures from right to go unrepeated?

#### Introduction

- On what ground do many people refuse to believe that God will punish the disobedient?
- State and discuss three possible positions on this subject.
- Which of the three is the only tenable position?
- God Knows How to Punish and Reward
- What use does Peter make of angels in this chapter?
- What does the Bible teach about fallen angels?
- What use does Peter make of the world in the time of Noah?
- What does Peter say of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah?

- What was Lot's attitude toward the wickedness of these cities?
- What is meant by Lot's vexing his righteous soul with their lawless deeds?
- What conclusion does Peter reach from the citation of these examples?
- When does punishment of the wicked begin?

#### Description of the Wicked

- What was Balaam's sin as revealed by Peter?
- Who was Balak?
- What was his connection with Balaam?
- How does Peter put the stamp of approval of God on this Old Testament story?
- What lesson is suggested by the statement that these men were springs without water?
- How does Peter refer to the pride and emptiness of these false teachers?
- How may teachers today lead their hearers further into the chains of sin and spiritual bondage?

#### The Miserable State of the Wicked Illustrated

- What can you say of the emphasis which Peter placed on knowledge in both his epistles?
- How can the sinner escape the defilement of the world?
- Can a Christian become entangled again in the defilement of the world?
- Why is this fallen state worse than the first?
- Can you develop by use of this text positive proof of the possibility of apostasy?
- What two illustrations does Peter use to enforce his lesson on the possibility of apostasy?
- What is there of interest to you in lessons to learn?

## Lesson XIII—December 30, 1956

### THE END OF THE WORLD

#### Lesson Text

- 1 This is now, beloved, the second<sup>2</sup> epistle that I write unto you; and in both of them I stir up your sincere mind by putting you in remembrance:
- 2 That ye should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles:
- 3 Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts,
- 4 And saying, Where is the prom-

ise of his coming? for, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

5 For this they wilfully forget, that there were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the word of God;

6 By which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

7 But the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

8 But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not

wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

11 Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in *all* holy living and godliness,

12 Looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

13 But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."* (2 Pet. 3: 18a.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Pet. 3: 14-18.

### Daily Bible Readings

December 24.	M.	The Lord's Coming Unexpected (Matt. 24: 45-51)
December 25.	T.	In Flaming Fire (2 Thess. 1: 3-9)
December 26.	W.	Dead Raised (John 5: 28, 29)
December 27.	T.	General Judgment (Matt. 25: 31-46)
December 28.	F.	Wicked Punished (Dan. 12: 1-3)
December 29.	S.	The Heavenly City (Rev. 21: 1-7)
December 30.	S.	Destruction of Satan (Rev. 20: 7-10)

TIME.—A.D. 60-64.

PLACE.—Babylon.

PERSONS.—Peter and the saints at Asia Minor.

### Golden Text Explained

1. Grow in Grace, (a) Meaning of grace. Some say that the word grace here means religion in general, that one is to become more religious, more deeply conscious of God's abiding presence and to grow in the appreciation of things spiritual. Others take the word grace to mean the sum total of all God's favors toward us. But since this expression occurs elsewhere, it will be well for us to interpret its meaning here in the light of its meaning in other passages. Paul said, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich." (2 Cor. 8: 9.) Thayer says that the expression, "the grace of Jesus Christ," as used by Paul in this verse means, "In that through pity for sinful men

Christ left his state of blessedness with God in heaven, and voluntarily underwent the hardships and miseries of human life, and by his suffering and death procured salvation for mankind." Paul also exhorted the Corinthians that, as they then abounded in everything such as faith and utterance and earnestness and in their love, they should see that they abound in this grace also. (2 Cor. 8: 7.) So both Paul and Peter exhort us to grow in that feeling of pity and compassion for those in unfavorable circumstances so that we may do all in our power to alleviate their sufferings and to better their conditions, even as Christ in his pity for us became poor in that he left the blessedness of heaven in order that we may become rich in that we are now heirs of eternal life. (b)

How to grow in grace. There is no better way to grow in the cultivation of any grace than to exercise ourselves in that grace. So, if we wish to grow in the field of pity and compassion for those in unfortunate circumstances, we ought to serve them; we ought to exercise ourselves in doing good toward them. Next, we should pray that the Lord will enable us to grow in this grace. Prayer is a challenge to all of us. If you do not wish to grow in this grace, it will be better that you do not pray for that growth, for God may answer your prayer. Someone has spoken of "the calculated risk of prayer." The calculated risk is that the Lord may answer our prayers and make out of us what we pray to be. If we pray to be humble, energetic servants, he may make that of us. If we pray for the power to forgive our enemies, he may give us that power. And so, if we exercise ourselves in doing good to others and pray that God will teach us to love this service and to grow more diligent and efficient in it, we may expect to grow in the grace of Christ. (c) Some hindrances to growth. Some do not grow in this grace because they are too proud to render the lowly, menial services which are required. Others do not grow in this grace because of the inconvenience connected with it. They do not wish to miss the forms of entertainment and pleasure to which they have become accustomed. But the greatest hindrance is that lack of feeling of pity and compassion for those who need our services.

2. Grow in knowledge of Christ,  
 (a) The Bible is our only textbook.

It is impossible to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ through the study of science or philosophy. While the study of these things is good in its place, yet science, philosophy, mathematics, history, or any other course in the arts and sciences is not intended to cause one to grow spiritually. Our spiritual growth depends upon our taking the spiritual food which is supplied by revelation only. (b) God's provision for our growth. In Eph. 4: 11-15 we are told that, when Jesus ascended up on high, he gave gifts unto, men and that he gave some to be apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints that they might not always be children but might grow up in all things into Christ who is the head. Here we are told that apostles and prophets are given us for our spiritual growth, and we have the apostles and prophets in the New Testament. We are also told that we are given evangelists, pastors, and teachers, and that they are for our growth in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. (c) If these are given to us to grow in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, our obligation to grow is a measure of the necessity for using these provisions. We use the evangelists, pastors, and teachers when we attend the periods of instruction. They do not function in their teaching capacity twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, but when they do function in that teaching capacity, it is as necessary that we attend those periods of teaching as it is necessary that we grow in knowledge.

### Introduction

The second coming of Christ and the end of the world are subjects of universal interest to religious people. The two events are not to be separated. Jesus tells us that all nations shall be gathered before him, that he will judge them at his coming in his glory, that the wicked will be sent into punishment, and the righteous into everlasting life. (Matt. 25: 31ff.) In the parable of the tares we learn that the "harvest is the end of the world," and that at that time the Son of Man will send forth his angels to gather out the good grain and save it and cast the

bad into the furnace of fire. (Matt. 13: 39-42.) Again, in the parable of the net we are told that the net was cast into the sea and gathered fish of every kind, and when it was drawn to shore, the fish were separated and the good were saved while the bad were cast away. Jesus concludes, "So shall it be in the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from the righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire." (Matt. 13: 47-49.) From these parables we learn that the judgment is to be at the end of the world. We have al-

ready learned that Jesus is coming for judgment; consequently we conclude that the second coming of Jesus will be at the end of the world. The righteous dead will be raised at the coming of Christ. (John 6: 40, 44; 1 Thess. 4: 15-17.) The wicked dead

will be raised the same hour the righteous dead are raised. (John 5: 28, 29.) Therefore, both the righteous and the wicked will be raised at the coming of Christ, which is at the end of the world.

### Exposition of the Text

#### I. Mockers and Their Questions (2 Pet. 3: 1-4)

*The second epistle that I write unto you.* Peter reminds his readers that this is the second letter which he has written to them. And he says that in both of these letters he has stirred up their sincere mind by putting them in remembrance of certain things. He speaks of their minds as being sincere. This is from a word which means to be open, clear, or manifest, and suggests that the minds of these brethren were open to the teaching of the apostles. The apostles were not ashamed to repeat their lessons, knowing that it was good for people to be reminded of them and of the principles of Christianity. (Phil. 3: 1.)

*Remember the words which were spoken before.* Peter again suggests that they should remember what they have been taught, and he reminds them of the source of their teaching. This source was "the holy prophets, and the commandments of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles." It is difficult to determine whether Peter's mention of "holy prophets" includes only Old Testament prophets or both the prophets of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Prophets are inspired representatives or speakers of God, and are often mentioned in the New Testament. (Acts 13: 1; Eph. 2: 20, 3: 5; 4: 11.) Undoubtedly Peter includes New Testament prophets in this statement, for they would have more to say about the second coming of Christ and the end of the world than the Old Testament prophets. If this be true, we have an inspired apostle putting New Testament prophets on a par with the prophets of the Old Testament. We also have in this connection proof that Peter considered the apostles on a level with the Old Testament prophets so far as their right and authority to speak for the Lord is concerned. Peter also says that the teaching delivered by the apostles was not of their own

learning or their own wisdom, but the commandment of Jesus Christ. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to bring to their remembrance the things which he had spoken and to show them things to come and guide them into the teaching of all truth. (John 16: 7ff.)

*In the last days mockers shall come.* The expression "in the last days" refers to the last dispensation, or the Christian age. Peter does not mean to say that when these mockers begin to preach the things suggested here the end of the world is at hand. There have been mockers saying the very things Peter predicted since the time of the apostles. Hence, the presence of mockers ridiculing the idea of the world's coming to an end is no indication that the end of the world is just at hand. The prophet Joel predicted the pouring out of the Spirit in the last days, and Peter says that prophecy was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2: 14ff.) From this we see that the expression "the last days" does not necessarily refer to the end of the world, but to the last dispensation of time.

*Where is the promise of his coming?* The Lord promised to return, and many people of that day, in spite of apostolic discouragement, expected the return of the Lord during their lifetime. (2 Thess. 2: 1ff.) So, Peter does not mean by the statement, "Where is the promise of his coming?" to imply that these mockers did not know that such promise had been given. What their question means is, where is there any indication of the fulfillment of such a promise? They then offer, as evidence that there is no such indication, the fact that "from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." Their argument was that, since all things remained exactly as they have been since creation, all things will continue indefinitely as they now are.

That is the argument of the modernist and the materialist of our day, but their one fatal mistake is that they leave God out of their thinking.

## II. Things We Should Remember (2 Pet. 3: 5-9)

*For this they will fully forget.*

The following is offered for our consideration here: (a) their ignorance of these matters was willful, intentional. They did not know of the changes that had taken place because they did not wish to know. Their statement that all things are the same from the time of creation was not according to fact, and their ignorance of these facts was willful, (b) Their statement was untrue. They based their conclusions on a false premise. Then Peter proceeds to show the falsity of the position they had taken.

*There were heavens from of old.* Peter refers to the creation in this verse and says that the earth was compacted out of water and amidst water. In this he refers to the division of the waters above the firmament from the waters under the firmament. (Gen. 1: 6, 7.) Though the earth was compacted out of water and amidst water, we are not thus to conclude that it was done by a long, natural process of evolution, for Peter adds that it was done "by the word of God." This agrees with another statement of inspiration, "By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which appear." (Heb. 11: 3.)

*Being overflowed with water, perished.* Peter says that the world perished through water. We should notice that it was the *earth* compacted out of water and amidst water, and in this verse it is *world* which was destroyed. Peter uses two different words for earth (*gee*) and world (*kosmos*), and if we confuse them we will fail to understand his teaching in this chapter. We should notice that Peter says the world was destroyed by means of the water which was divided in creation, and in the account of the flood we learn that not only the fountains of the great deep, the waters from below the firmament, were broken up, but also the windows of heaven were opened to permit the flow of the waters above the firmament. (Gen. 7: 11.) By this means the world that

then was perished. The word *perished* here used is the translation of the Greek word (*apollumi*) which is used about ninety times in the New Testament. It occurs in such passages as John 3: 15, 16; 1 Cor. 8: 11; Heb. 1: 11; 1 Pet. 1: 7. Of its use in this verse Vine cites Moulton to the effect that "the perfective force of the verb implies the completion of the process of destruction." The word *world* in this verse does not mean the earth on which we live, for the earth did not perish: it was not destroyed. The word *world* is used in the same sense that it is used when Jesus said, "The world cannot hate you." (John 7: 7.)

*But the heavens that now are, and the earth.* Peter says that the present heavens and earth are kept by the same word against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. The ancient world was destroyed by water, but the present heaven and earth are to be destroyed by fire. And this destruction is to take place at the day of judgment. Not only will the heavens and the earth be destroyed at that time, but ungodly men also will be destroyed. Here we have an example of the meaning of the word translated "perished" in verse 6. Ungodly men are to be "destroyed," and the same word is used as is translated "perished" in verse six.

*But forget not this one thing.* Peter wishes to remind the brethren that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. This does not mean that when God uses the word *day* he means one thousand years; it simply means that the passing of years, decades, and millenniums will not in any way lessen the surety that God's promises will be fulfilled.

*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise.* This is something else that Peter wished his readers to remember. God is a promise-keeping God, and all his promises will be fulfilled. The end of this age is not postponed because God has forgotten his promises, but rather because God is longsuffering to men, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

## III. Passing of the Old and Coming of the New (2 Pet. 3: 10-13)

*The day of the Lord will come as a thief.* The expression, "the day of



Noah were not prepared when the flood came, so those who disbelieve Peter will be unprepared when the fire comes.

3. The practical side of this lesson

is holiness and godliness in view of the destruction of all things temporal and the establishment of new heavens and earth where only the righteous can dwell.

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.

What did the mockers say of the return of Jesus and the end of the world?  
On what false premise did these mockers base their argument?

Golden Text Explained  
What is the meaning of the word **grace** in our text?

Things We Should Remember  
What is said of the ignorance of these false teachers?

What two things are mentioned as being necessary to grow in grace?

What is said of water in connection with the creation of the earth?

State and discuss some hindrances to the cultivation of grace.

What part did the word of God have in the creation of the universe?

What is the Christian's textbook?  
What is said of the value of science and philosophy as means of growth in grace?

What distinction is made between the word **earth** and the word **world** in this text?

What means has God provided for our growth in knowledge?

From what two sources was water brought for the destruction of the world?

What can you say of our duty to use the means God has provided?

What is the meaning of the word **perish** as used in this text?

Introduction

What element is to be used in the destruction of the present heavens and the earth?

What two subjects are of universal interest to religious people?

Why should not the time involved cause us to doubt the fulfillment of God's promises?

What do the parables of Jesus teach about the end of the world and the second coming of Christ?

Passing of the Old and Coming of the New

Can you prove that the righteous and the wicked will be raised at the same time?  
Can you prove that this will be at the end of the world?

Why will the coming of the day of the Lord be as a thief?

Mockers and Their Questions

Describe the passing of the heavens.  
What will happen to the earth and the works therein?

How does Peter suggest that the minds of his readers were open to his teaching?  
What is said of the value of repetition in teaching the gospel?

Show that the earth will actually and literally be destroyed.

What was the source of the teaching which these churches had received?

In view of these events, what manner of persons ought all to be?

What indication is there that Peter placed New Testament prophets on a par with Old Testament prophets?

What should be our attitude toward the coming of these events?

What did Peter predict would come in the last days?

What is said of the new heavens and new-earth?

What is meant by the last days?  
Did apostles encourage people to believe that Jesus would return during their lifetime?

What place is there for a millennial reign of Christ on the earth after his second coming?

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