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

Teacher's Annual Lesson Commentary

ON

UNIFORM BIBLE LESSONS

FOR THE

CHURCHES OF CHRIST

1963

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

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P R E F A C E

The lessons for the first quarter for 1963 complete the studies on the Kingdom of Israel, which were begun last year. The student who preserves these annuals will have, in the two volumes referred to, a fairly comprehensive outline and commentary on that significant period in the history of God's people. The kingdom of Israel was united under three successive kings, Saul, David, and Solomon, for a period of one hundred and twenty years; and then, because of the great sins of Solomon, the kingdom was divided; and continued in that state during the rest of its earthly existence. Those who give attention to some Old Testament prophetic statements regarding the closing years of the Kingdom of Judah, as pointed out in this annual, will see how it is that only Christ, who now occupies the throne of David, could be king after the fall of the southern kingdom. These lessons therefore are important in helping the student maintain the over-all view of God's government of his people.

The lessons for the remaining three quarters of this year are based on four of the epistles which Paul wrote to churches of his day. These lessons have to do with actual situations which existed then; and Paul, as his custom was, not only supplied the information which the people needed then; he laid down principles which will help Christians in all ages of the world to meet whatever problems they face, and to make the kind of progress in the work (if the Lord which will please him and make the people themselves both better and happier. Those who are responsible for the preparation and distribution of these annuals and other Bible study helps are committed to the truth that "every scripture inspired of God is also 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, 17.) Our aim is simply to help those who use these lesson helps to see that which inspired men have left on record for men throughout the time they shall live upon the earth. There is no substitution for the word of God itself.

The teacher in the Lord's day Bible school has an opportunity second to none in the formation of Christian character and the acquiring of that kind of information and spiritual discernment which are so essential to Christian living. His first aim should be to learn well the great truths with which he is to deal, and then to lead the class before him in an honest effort to see exactly what the Bible says, and how it can be made useful to people of this age. There are too many people who try to explain what the Bible means, before they realize and know what it says.

This is the forty-second annual volume which the Gospel Advocate Company has published for use of churches of Christ; and the eighteenth which has borne the title. *Teacher's Annual Lesson Commentary on Bible School Lessons*. Both the author and the publishers sincerely trust that this volume will prove to be helpful to the many thousands of teachers and students who make use of it throughout the year.

THE AUTHOR.

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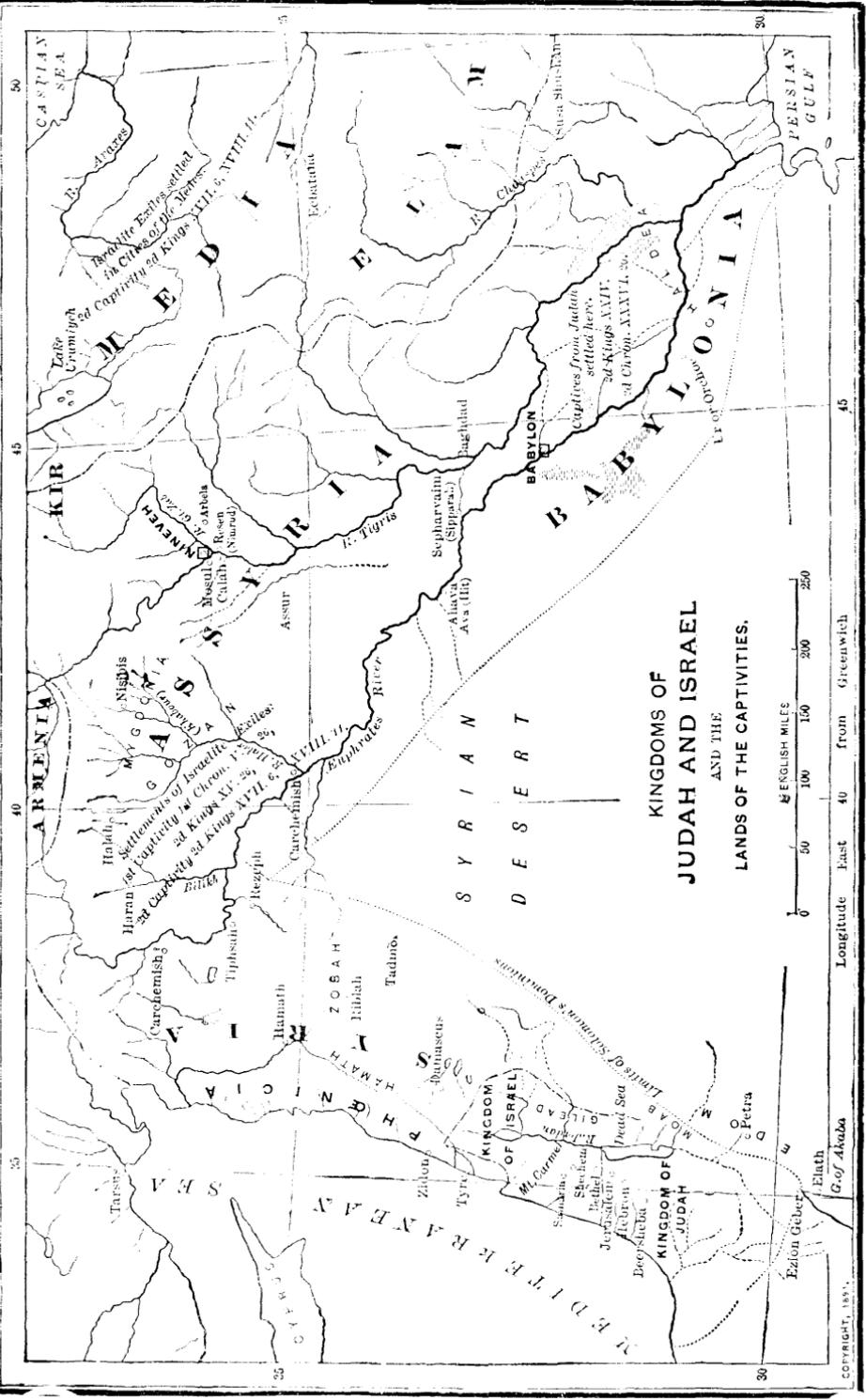
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**KINGDOMS OF
JUDAH AND ISRAEL
AND THE
LANDS OF THE CAPTIVITIES.**

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FIRST QUARTER

THE PERIOD OF THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

Aim.—To follow the history of the Southern Kingdom—Judah and Benjamin—and to see the outworking of God's plan to bring into the world our Redeemer and Lord, Jesus of Nazareth.

Lesson I—January 6, 1963

REHOBAM, KING OF THE SOUTHERN DIVISION

Lesson Text

1 Kings 12: 1-11; 21-24

1 And Re-ho-bo'am went to Shechem: for all Is'ra-el were come to Shechem to make him king.

2 And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Ne-bat heard of it (for he was yet in E-gypt, whither he had fled from the presence of king Sol-o-mon, and Jer-o-bo'am dwelt in E-gypt,

3 And they sent and called him), that Jer-o-bo'am and all the assembly of Is'ra-el came, and spake unto Re-ho-bo'am, saying,

4 Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee.

5 And he said unto them, Depart yet for three days, then come again to me. And the people departed.

6 And king Re-ho-bo'am took counsel with the old men, that had stood before Sol'o-mon his father while he yet lived, saying, What counsel give ye me to return answer to this people?

7 And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever.

8 But he forsook the counsel of the old men which they had given him, and took counsel with the young men that were grown up with him, that stood before him.

9 And he said unto them, What counsel give ye, that we may return answer to this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke

that thy father did put upon us lighter?

10 And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou say unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou speak unto them, My little finger is thicker than my father's loins.

11 And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

21 And when Re-ho-bo'am was come to Je-ru'-sa-lem, he assembled all the house of Ju'-dah, and the tribe of Ben'-ja-min, a hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, that were warriors, to fight against the house of Is'ra-el, to bring the kingdom again to Re-ho-bo'am the son of Sol'o-mon.

22 But the word of God came unto She-ma'-iah the man of God, saying,

23 Speak unto Re-ho-bo'am the son of Sol'o-mon, king of Ju'-dah, and unto all the house of Ju'-dah and Ben'-ja-min, and to the rest of the people, saying,

24 Thus saith Je-ho'-vah, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Is'ra-el: return every man to his house; for this thing is of me. So they hearkened unto the word of Je-ho'-vah, and returned and went their way, according to the word of Je-ho'-vah.

Golden Text.—*"There was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only"* (1 Kings 12: 20.)

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TIME.—975 B.C.

PLACES.—Shechem and Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Rehoboam and his advisers; Jeroboam and the people of Israel.

Introduction

Although Rehoboam's reaction to the situation in which he was involved at the time of this lesson was exceedingly foolish, it remains a fact that the situation was not of his own creation. His father Solomon was directly responsible for it; and if one will read the eleventh chapter of First Kings he will easily see why. Solomon was the wisest king who ever sat upon a throne, but his personal life was as foolish as his mind was brilliant. Instead of exerting an influence upon the world about him by dedicating himself to the cause of Jehovah, Solomon allowed the world to direct his life. In his effort to become worldly great, Solomon surrounded himself with influences which destroyed the spiritual qualities which he earlier possessed. The result was that the morality which was his during the earlier part of his reign was corrupted and gradually lost in the degeneration which followed. This is the way the inspired historian expressed the matter:

"And Jehovah was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned away from Jehovah, the God of Israel, who had appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept

not that which Jehovah commanded. Wherefore Jehovah said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake; but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but I will give one tribe to thy son, for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen." (1 Kings 11: 9-13.)

This should be an impressive lesson to parents and church leaders today: for it is they who are setting the stage for tomorrow, and who are, to a very large extent, determining the type of work which succeeding generations must do. It often happens that selfish people, bent upon having their own way, have little, if any, thought about what their children will have to suffer. It is the solemn duty of every person, and especially every Christian, to endeavor to leave the world better than he found it; and this can only be done by taking the will of God into consideration. When people do right they are making it possible for their children to have "an unfettered start and a fair chance in the race of life."

The Golden Text

"There was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only." It appears from 1 Kings 11: 13 that only one tribe was promised to Rehoboam, that is, one complete tribe—the tribe of Judah. While it appears that the tribe of Levi was more or less loyal to the house of David, it should be remembered that they were not reckoned as one of the

twelve tribes which made up the united kingdom. On the other hand, the record just as expressly says that only ten tribes went with Jeroboam, and it also says that Benjamin was counted with Judah. When all the facts are considered together, it appears that Judah was the only *whole* tribe which remained with Rehoboam. Jerusalem, the capital of

the united kingdom, and the center of Jewish worship, was on the border line which separated Judah and Benjamin; and that fact evidently had some bearing on the attitude of the people of Benjamin, and especially those in and near the city of Jerusalem.

Some Bible students are of the opinion that only a part of the tribe of Benjamin remained loyal to the original kingdom, and if that is true, then it is easy to understand why the record says that only the tribe of Judah adhered to Rehoboam. This is the view of Oehler who says that the tribe of Benjamin was divided between the two kingdoms, with the greater part of the country belonging to the northern kingdom, while the more populous part, in which the northern section of Jerusalem and its environs were located, was united with the southern kingdom. This could very well be true, since the inspired historian quotes Jehovah as saying that only one tribe would continue with Rehoboam, and

that ten tribes would go with Jeroboam. This, of course, left one other tribe which was not originally reckoned with either. See 1 Kings 11: 13, 30-36.

If 1 Kings 12: 20, 21 are read together, we have this, although the two verses are in different paragraphs: "There was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only. And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, and the tribe of Benjamin, a hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, that were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam the son of Solomon." Thus, it was the "house of Judah," and the *tribe of Benjamin*, against the "house of Israel," which appears to confirm the fact that the tribe of Benjamin was not originally counted as a part of the house of Judah, that is, at the time of the division of the united kingdom.

The Text Explained

The Request for Social and Economic Relief

(1 Kings 12: 1-5)

And *Rehoboam went to Shechem for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king*. Rehoboam, so far as the record goes, was the only son of Solomon, although the latter had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, that is, secondary wives, women who were slaves, taken captive in war, or acquired in some way other than by free choice. See 1 Kings 11: 3; cf. Hos. 4: 10. Solomon, as already noted, was a very wise man, but his son was the very opposite, as may be seen from the record. Adam Clarke calls him "a poor, unprincipled fool"; and he goes on to say that if Solomon had kept himself within reasonable bounds in matrimonial affairs, he probably would have had more children; and such as would have had common sense enough to discern the delicacy of their situation, and rule according to reason and religion. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he began to reign (2 Chron. 12: 13), which was probably twice the age of Solomon when he became king.

Shechem was located in the hill-country of Ephraim (Josh. 20: 7), in the narrow valley between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. The city therefore was not only well within the territory of the dissatisfied tribes, but was in Ephraim, the dominant tribe of what became the northern kingdom. In fact, it became the capital of Jeroboam after the division. See 1 Kings 12: 25. In saying that Jeroboam built the city, the meaning is that he enlarged and fortified it as the seat of his government. Rehoboam did not go to Shechem in order to be made king; that was his by right of inheritance; but by going into the territory, to one of the principal cities, of the dissatisfied tribes, he hoped to get them to accept him as their king.

And *it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard of it (for he was yet in Egypt, whither he had fled from the presence of king Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt, and they sent and called him), that Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came, and spake unto Rehoboam, saying, Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and the heavy yoke*

which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee. And he said unto them, Depart yet for three days, then come again to me. And the people departed.

The tenth and eleventh chapters of First Kings give some idea of the terrible burdens which Solomon placed upon the shoulders of his people, and why Jeroboam fled from his presence and went to Egypt. Solomon's father David spent a lifetime of sacrifice in building up the kingdom, so that when his son came to the throne everything was ready for a prosperous and glorious reign; but before Solomon had finished his course, the kingdom was ready to disintegrate.

It should also be noted that the complaints against Solomon which were made to Rehoboam were not based on Solomon's idolatry and wicked life, but only the trouble which they felt he had caused them. It is, of course, proper and right for people to seek relief from unjust burdens which they are compelled to bear, but that is not the most important task which needs and deserves their attention. Their chief desire should have been to see to it that the moral and spiritual state of the kingdom be restored. Something of the same situation involved the people of Jesus' day. They were laboring and heavy laden under the Romans, who took heavy taxes from their land and sea earnings; and otherwise placed heavy burdens upon them. It was to such people that Jesus spoke when he said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matt. 11: 28-30.)

As long as the world remains sinful, burdens will have to be borne, and unpleasant conditions will have to be endured; and even if the world itself could make the way of life easier for us, we should never give our consent to serve it. Our responsibility is to God; and we have the Lord's promise that if we will do right, we at least will have the inward peace which the world can neither give nor take away. Let us work, then, for a better life here,

but above all that the will of the Lord may be done.

A Revelation of Character (1 Kings 12: 6-11)

And the king Rehoboam took counsel with the old men, that had stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, saying, What counsel give ye me to return answer to this people? And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever. But he forsook the counsel of the old men which they had given him, and took counsel with the young men that were grown up with him, that stood before him.

The first mistake which Rehoboam made was in delaying to reassure the people who had come to him. He did not need any counsel in order to tell them that he would do the best he could to be fair and equitable in dealing with them. But even if the king felt that he should take some time to consider the people's petition, it certainly would not require three days to formulate an answer. Matthew Henry, in commenting on this case, says that it was prudent for Rehoboam to get some advice from others, especially since he had so weak a head of his own; yet, upon this occasion, it showed a lack of familiarity with human nature; for by his very delay he indicated to the people that they would not have a sympathetic answer from him, thereby giving time for the ripening of a revolt. In other words, his deliberation in so plain a case would clearly indicate to the people the little concern which he had for their relief.

But if he was going to seek advice, he showed wisdom, on the surface at least, by turning first to the old men. But it is quite evident from the context that it was not advice which he wanted. The old men had themselves been young; but after years of experience, they were in position to tell the new king what was best for both the people and himself. They had seen Solomon his father at his best and at his worst; and they were therefore prepared to view the situation objectively. In short, they were capable of telling

the king how to make sure that he could have a reign which would please God and be a blessing to the people.

And he said unto them, What counsel give ye, that we may return answer to this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke that thy father did put upon us lighter? And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou speak unto them, My little finger is thicker than my father's loins. And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

The term "But," as used in verse 8, indicates a contrast; and in that contrast is a revelation of character. After receiving the wholesome advice of the old men, he promptly forsook it, and turned to the men of his own age. When he asked the old men regarding an answer to give to the people, he said, "What counsel give ye me to return answer to this people?" but when he approached the young men, he said, "What counsel give ye, that we may return answer to this people, . . .?" This is enough to show that Rehoboam was primarily interested in pleasing himself; and since he took only the counsel which pleased him, he was in reality following his own desires. The basic reason for Rehoboam's attitude is expressed by John Balguy in these words: "Whoever is wise is apt to suspect and be diffident of himself, and upon that account is willing to hearken unto counsel; whereas the foolish man, being, in proportion to his folly, full of himself, and swallowed up in conceit, will seldom take any counsel but his own, and for the very reason that it is his own."

The bravado which characterized the reply of Rehoboam to the people had the opposite effect of that which he expected. In the expression "little finger," there is no original word for "finger." The idea is simply something little or insignificant. It is as if Rehoboam had said, "The smallest thing about me will be greater than the largest thing

about my father." The difference between the "whips" and the "scorpions" was that of severity. The whips were merely lashes, while the scorpions were armed with iron points which sunk into and tore the flesh. But instead of the flamboyancy of the king cowing the people into submission, his threat precipitated a revolt on the part of ten tribes of the Israelites. In the words of Bacon, "The kingdom of Israel was first rent and broken by ill counsel; upon which there are set, for our instruction, the two marks whereby bad counsel is ever best discerned—that it was young counsel for the persons, and violent counsel for the matter." No better oomment can be made on this incident than that which was made by the sacred historian, namely,

"And when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents. But as for the children of Israel that dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them. Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the men subject to taskwork; and all Israel stoned him to death with stones. And king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem. So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day. And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was returned, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only." (1 Kings 12: 16-20.)

The Division of the Kingdom Divinely Ratified

(1 Kings 12: 21-24)

And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, and the tribe of Benjamin, a hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, that were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam the son of Solomon. But the word of God came unto She-maiah, the man of God, saying,

Speak unto Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the rest of the people, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is of me. So they hearkened unto the word of Jehovah, and returned and went their way, according to the word of Jehovah.

After the failure of Adoram to restore order, Rehoboam decided to employ the force of his army to bring the people of Israel into subjection. That, however, was cut short by the word of Jehovah through the prophet Shemaiah. It was to the credit of Rehoboam that he hearkened to the word of Jehovah. It was not the will of God that sin should cause the disruption of the kingdom; but since evil was there, the Lord overruled the course of events by approving the good and punishing the evil. We learn from 2 Chron. 11; 13-17 that the Levites strengthened the kingdom of Rehoboam, because of the treatment they received at the hands of Jeroboam. "So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah,

and made Rehoboam the son of Solomon strong three years; for they walked three years in the way of David and Solomon."

Rehoboam was not a strong man, nor was he the worst of men. If he had been properly trained in the court of his father, he might have made a much better king. But as it was, the words of Lord Macaulay regarding James I might also very appropriately be applied to Rehoboam, namely, "fortune placed him in a situation in which his weakness covered him with disgrace, and in which his accomplishments brought him no honor." Rehoboam had eighteen wives and sixty concubines, and became the father of twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters. His favorite wife was Maacah, the daughter of Absalom, and it was her son Abijah whom he chose to succeed him on the throne. The other twenty-seven sons were placed in the fortified cities throughout the land of Judah and Benjamin; "and he gave them victuals in abundance. And he sought for them many wives." (See 2 Chron. 11; 18-23.) The length of Rehoboam's reign in Jerusalem was seventeen years. (1 Kings 14: 21.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What was the background of the situation in which Rehoboam found himself at the time of this lesson?
Why did Solomon fail so miserably in his own personal life?
What was the real reason for the division of the kingdom?
What is the value of this lesson to parents and church leaders today?

The Golden Text

How many tribes were in the kingdom of Judah?
How many tribes did Jehovah promise Rehoboam?
How, then, did Benjamin become a part of the kingdom?

The Request for Social and Economic Relief

How many sons did Solomon apparently have?
How do you account for the character of Rehoboam?
How old was he when he began to reign?
Why did he go to Shechem?
What request did the people make there?
Tell something of the hardships of the people during Solomon's reign.

What was the basis of the complaints which they made?
What lesson is there in this for us?
What should be our attitude toward the world and its ways?

A Revelation of Character

What was the first mistake which Rehoboam made with reference to the request of the people?
Was it wise for him to ask for some delay in preparation for a full reply to them?
Give reasons for your answer.
Why did he probably seek for the counsel of the old men first?
Why didn't he take their advice?
What does the term "But" in verse 8 indicate? Give reasons for your answer.
How is character revealed by the way one takes the advice of others?
What did Rehoboam mean by the answer he gave to the people?
What effect did it have on them?

The Division of the Kingdom Divinely Ratified

Discuss the movements of Rehoboam following the reaction of the people to his reply to them.
In what way was the division of the kingdom divinely ratified?
Discuss the character of Rehoboam from the standpoint of his conduct.
What is known of his family?
How long did he reign as king?

Lesson II—January 13, 1963

ASA'S GOOD REIGN

Lesson Text

2 Chron. 15: 1-15

1 And the Spirit of God came upon Az-a-ri'-ah the son of O'-ded:

2 And he went out to meet A'-sa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, A'-sa, and all Ju'-dah and Ben'-ja-min: Je-ho'-vah is with you, while ye are with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.

3 Now for a long season Is'-ra-el was without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law:

4 But when in their distress they turned unto Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el, and sought him, he was found of them.

5 And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in; but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the lands.

6 And they were broken in pieces, nation against nation, and city against city; for God did vex them with all adversity.

7 But be ye strong, and let not your hands be slack; for your work shall be rewarded.

8 And when A'-sa heard these words, and the prophecy of O'-ded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominations out of all the land of Ju'-dah and Ben'-ja-min, and out of the cities which he had taken from the hill-country of E'-phra-im; and he renewed the altar

of Je-ho'-vah, that was before the porch of Je-ho'-vah.

9 And he gathered all Ju'-dah and Ben'-ja-min, and them that sojourned with them out of E'-phra-im and Ma-nas'-seh, and out of Sim-ê-6n; for they fell to him out of Is'-ra-el in abundance, when they saw that Je-ho'-vah his God was with him.

10 So they gathered themselves together at Je-ru'-sa-lem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of A'-sa.

11 And they sacrificed unto Je-ho'-vah in that day, of the spoil which they had brought, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep.

12 And they entered into the covenant to seek Je-ho'-vah, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul;

13 And that whosoever would not seek Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el, should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman.

14 And they sware unto Je-ho'-vah with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets.

15 And all Ju'-dah rejoiced at the oath; for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them; and Je-ho'-vah gave them rest round about.

Golden Text.—“Be ye strong, and let not your hands be slack; for your work shall be rewarded”(2 Chron. 15: 7.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Chron. 15: 16-19.

Daily Bible Readings

January 7.	M.....	Judah's First King (1 Kings 14: 21-31)
January 8.	T.....	Civil War (1 Kings 16: 8-16)
January 9.	W.....	Unfaithfulness of Rehoboam (2 Chron. 12: 1-14)
January 10.	T.....	Royal Seed Almost Destroyed (2 Kings 11: 1-3)
January 11.	F.....	Judah Defeats Israel (2 Chron. 13: 13-22)
January 12.	S.....	The Reforms of Asa (2 Chron. 15: 1-15)
January 13.	S.....	Righteousness in Judah (2 Chron. 13: 1-12)

TIME.—955-914 B.C.

PLACES.—Jerusalem, and the lands of Judah and Benjamin.

PERSONS.—Azariah, Asa, and the people of the southern kingdom.

Introduction

Asa was the third king of Judah, following the division of the kingdom which had been ruled over by Saul, David, and Solomon. He was the son of Abijah, and the grandson of Rehoboam; and this, of course, made him the great grandson of Solomon. The four kings mentioned here furnish a wonderful opportunity for character study. Solomon, the wisest of them all, turned out to be probably the greatest sinner of the group. Rehoboam was very foolish in his approach to the problems which confronted him, while Abijah manifested the kind of trust in Jehovah in the face of danger which resulted in his triumph over his adversaries. Read 2 Chron. 13: 1-22. This attitude on the part of Abijah was probably reflected in his son Asa, as we shall see further on in this lesson.

Asa was a good king, and his reign of forty-one years was exceeded in length by only two other kings of Judah, namely, Uzziah, fifty-two years; and Manasseh, fifty-five years. There was only one other ruler of the southern kingdom who reigned as many as forty years—Joash. Asa became king of Judah during the closing part of Jeroboam's reign, and in addition to Jeroboam, he had as his contemporaries the following kings of Israel, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri, and Ahab, during the first three years of the latter's reign. The great victory which Asa's father Abijah gained over the Israelites under Jeroboam, along with devotion to Jehovah, resulted in a period of peace, during the first ten years of Asa's reign. (See 2 Chron. 14: 1, 6, 7.) It was during this time of quiet that the king brought about many of his religious reformations. Idolatry had plagued the country since the days of Solomon; but when Asa came to the throne, he "did that which was good and right in the eyes of Jehovah his God: for he took away the foreign altars, and the high places, and brake down the pillars, and hewed down the Asherim, and com-

manded Judah to seek Jehovah, the God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment." (See 2 Chron. 14: 2-5; cf. 1 Kings 15: 9-15.)

It was also during this period of tranquility which Jehovah gave him that Asa strengthened the cities of his kingdom, and enjoyed great prosperity. He also was careful to give God the credit for all these good things. However, later on in his career, as we shall soon see, he depended upon men rather than Jehovah for the things which he wanted—this, notwithstanding the fact that, generally speaking, his heart was right before God. This is a forceful example of the weakness of the flesh which inspired writers frequently emphasize, and which we should always strive to overcome. While enjoying this period of peace and prosperity, Asa assembled an army from Judah and Benjamin of five hundred and eighty thousand men: "all these were mighty men of valor."

But when Zerah the Ethiopian came against Asa with an army of a million men and three hundred chariots, the good king of Judah did not depend upon his army alone for victory. After the battle was set in array, "Asa cried unto Jehovah his God, and said, Jehovah, there is none besides thee to help, between the mighty and him that hath no strength: help us, O Jehovah our God; for we rely on thee, and in thy name are we come against this multitude. O Jehovah, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee." This was a manifestation of Asa's faith in Jehovah, and is another reason for calling him a good king. The Lord's people today would do well to imitate this faith and make use of his prayer for deliverance from wicked men and nations; for Jehovah still rules in the governments of the world. (Cf. Dan. 4: 17; Rom. 13: 1-7.) Jehovah heard the prayer of Asa, and gave him a crushing victory over the Ethiopians. (See 2 Chron. 14: 9-15.)

The Golden Text

This part of our lesson is found in the lesson text, and will be considered in its proper order.

The Text Explained

The Prophet's Message to Asa

(2 Chron. 15: 1-7)

And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded: and he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: Jehovah is with you, while ye are with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you. Peter said that in olden times "men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1: 21), and this is an example of that process. It appears that in those days such men received the Spirit only when they had some special work to do. Man has never been able to direct his own steps (Jer. 10: 23), and he can never, by his own unaided reason learn and do the will of God (Isa. 55: 8, 9). Jehovah therefore has always revealed his will to man; and it is at that point that man's responsibility begins. There is nothing else known of the prophet who spoke to Asa, except what is said in the passage now under consideration. It is interesting to know, however, that there were more than twenty-five men in Old Testament times who bore the name Azariah.

The message which the prophet spoke to Asa came as the king was returning from the slaughter of the Ethiopians; for it was then that Azariah "went out to meet Asa." The king had put his trust in God in the face of the overwhelming force which was against him; and when people demonstrate their faith in God, he never fails to encourage them to greater faithfulness. But God's message was not to the king only, but also to all Judah and Benjamin. The words "Jehovah is with you, while ye are with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you" are just as applicable to people today, as they were when the prophet first spoke them. This truth had just been demonstrated by Asa (2 Chron. 14: 9-15), and the same is possible for anyone who wants to do so today. No one has ever sought God in vain. It is, of course, possible for one to deceive himself into thinking that he is seeking the Lord, when in reality he is

not; but if one will make certain that he is meeting the conditions which the Lord has named, there can be no doubt about the result. (Cf. Isa. 55: 6, 7; John 6: 44, 45; 7: 17.)

That which has just been said about seeking Jehovah implies man's ability to make a choice, and what is true of the freedom of his will to choose the good is just as true in the other direction. It is a fearful thing for a man to turn his back upon the Lord, but that is a responsibility which grows out of free moral agency; and it is just as easy for one to be deceived about his rejection of God as it is for him to be deceived into thinking that he is accepting him. It is not necessary therefore for one to be deliberate in his rejection of God: a refusal to hear and obey that which the Lord commands is all that is required in this connection. (See Matt. 12: 30; Heb. 2: 1-3; Gal. 1: 6-9.)

Now for a long season Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law: but when in their distress they turned unto Jehovah, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them. And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in; but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the lands. And they were broken in pieces, nation against nation, and city against city; for God did vex them with all adversity. Bible students are not agreed as to the particular time when Israel was without the true God, whether during the days of the judges, the time when the northern kingdom was led into idolatry by Jeroboam and his successors, or during the time of Asa's immediate predecessors. Some even think that the reference was to the future. But regardless of the time which Azariah referred to, there is no question regarding the conditions he described. The people were without God and a knowledge of his law; because there was no qualified priest to teach it to them. (Cf. Lev. 10: 8-11; 2 Chron. 17: 7-9; 2 Kings 17: 24-28.)

When the people of Israel had long been without God and his law, they found themselves in distressful circumstances, which resulted in their

turning to and seeking Jehovah, and "he was found of them." (Cf. Acts 17: 26-28.) It often happens that distressful conditions prove to be a blessing in disguise. Prosperity of a worldly kind too often turns people away from God; but if they turn to God in their distress, he will be found of them. It is, indeed, a mark of divine favor when people can't have peace while in their sins. When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden, they were cast out and were denied access to the tree of life; lest they should eat of its fruit and live forever. (See Gen. 3: 22-24.) It sometimes happens that people cry, "Peace, peace; when there is no peace" (Jer. 6: 14; cf. Isa. 48: 22), but they are either deceived themselves, or are trying to deceive someone else. Verses 5, 6 of the text now under consideration seem to indicate that the distress referred to extended to other nations besides Israel. They were all no doubt affected by the sins of each other.

But be ye strong, and let not your hands be slack; for your work shall be rewarded. These words should be understood in the light of the fact that Asa had already started his work of reformation. Verses 3-6 describe the condition of people without the true God, and the king was urged to continue the work which he had begun. "Great resolution and indomitable energy would be required to persevere in the face of the opposition your reforming measures will encounter" (Jamieson); but Jehovah always rewards the efforts of those who seek to destroy evil influences, and lead people back to him.

The King's Renewed Zeal in Religious Reforms (2 Chron. 15: 8)

And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominations out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from the hill-country of Ephraim; and he renewed the altar of Jehovah, that was before the porch of Jehovah. This verse shows something of the effect which the words of the prophet had on the king. He immediately renewed his zeal in rooting out everything which stood be-

tween the people and God, so that they might have his blessings while endeavoring to serve him. As already pointed out, it does take courage for one to undertake to cleanse the land of sin, and especially after it gets a hold on the people as it did on Judah and Benjamin. Not only were they engaged in these sins themselves; they were also encouraged by the practice of Solomon, Rehoboam, and other influential leaders. Today people are sometimes encouraged in certain errors and sins by otherwise good preachers; and it is almost impossible to overcome such influence.

It is well to keep in mind that Asa was not merely an iconoclast. He did indeed uproot the prevailing corruptions and abominations, but he put something in their place. He renewed the altar of burnt-offerings, and restored it to its proper use. Jesus taught a similar lesson on this same subject. "But the unclean spirit, when he is gone out of the man, passeth through waterless places, seeking rest, and findeth it not. Then he saith, I will return into my house whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man cometh worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this evil generation." (Matt. 12: 43-45.)

After getting rid of all that is displeasing to God, the process is but half completed. The evils which have been driven out must be replaced immediately with the good, honorable, truthful, and best. (Cf. Tit. 2: 11, 12.) Uprooting sins is to be commended, providing that one sets out at once to grow virtues. Righteousness is not merely the absence of evil; it involves the doing of that which God commands. If one merely cleans the weeds out of a field and prepares the ground for planting good seed, he only invites a new crop of weeds, briars, etc. If religion is to be a power for good in our lives, then there must be something in the center of our minds which will persuade our reason and understanding; something to which we can give the full consent of our intelligence. In other words, there

must be something which we believe, in the full meaning of that term. (Cf. Heb. 11: 6; James 2: 14-26.)

Asa and the People Join in a
Covenant to Serve Jehovah
(2 Chron. 15: 9-15)

And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and them that sojourned with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that Jehovah his God was with him. By consulting the map, it will be seen that Ephraim and Manasseh were north of Benjamin, while Simeon was south of Judah; and those three tribes were, with the exception of Dan, the closest to kingdom of Judah on the western side of the Jordan. Their action in coming to Asa shows that not all of the people in the northern kingdom were satisfied with the way in which Jeroboam and his successors were leading them. Many of them were ready to join with Asa in his reformation, as soon as they saw that Jehovah was with him. This also emphasized the opportunities which were his. He had it within his power to lead others back to the Lord; and just think what his sin would have been, had he neglected his opportunities!

This same principle is just as applicable to us in the cause of the great Restoration Movement. Those who are familiar with the history of the church are aware of the fact that there was a falling away from the original pattern which the Lord established. And after passing through the period of corruption known as the "dark ages," men began various efforts at reformation; but not being able to succeed in those endeavors, the next few hundred years saw the growth and development of Protestant denominationalism. It was not long, however, until some of the denominationalists began to realize that they were still away from the Lord's way, and they inaugurated the Restoration Movement. And it is very probable that the church grew faster during the earlier days of the Restoration Movement, than at anytime since the days of the apostles. And there is every reason for thinking that the church will continue to attract others from the denominations to it, when

they are made to see that we are endeavoring to get back to the Lord's way of doing things. This is both our great opportunity and responsibility.

So they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa. And they sacrificed unto Jehovah in that day, of the spoil which they had brought, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep. This gathering together was no doubt for the purpose of celebrating the feast of Pentecost, which the law of Moses required to be done in Jerusalem in the third month of their religious year. (Cf. Lev. 23: 15-22; Deut. 16: 9-12.) The oxen and sheep which they sacrificed were apparently those which they had taken from the Ethiopians. (See 2 Chron. 14: 12-15.) When people really turn to the Lord, there is no further trouble regarding their offerings to him (cf. 2 Cor. 8: 1-5); and if they do not know their duty in this respect they will make an effort to learn it. (Cf. 2 Cor. 9: 6-11.)

And they entered into the covenant to seek Jehovah, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul; and that whosoever would not seek Jehovah, the God of Israel, should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman. This twofold covenant (1) to seek Jehovah with all their heart and soul, and (2) to put to death any who would not do so, was meant to increase their sense of obligation in doing that which God had commanded them to do. It is one thing to know and understand that which God has spoken, but that alone will not suffice; there must be a determined effort on the part of the people to do their part. It is also well to remember that Jehovah will not accept half-hearted service from his people: they must make him first in all their relationships of life.

And they swear unto Jehovah with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets. And all Judah rejoiced at the oath; for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them: And Jehovah gave them rest round about. The rejoicing which followed the oath was for a good reason: they had struck idolatry a death blow, and

their oath made their covenant binding. And as further evidence of his sincerity, Asa removed the queen mother (actually his grandmother, 1 Kings 15: 1, 2) from her place in the royal household, along with her idolatry, the physical remains of which he burned at the brook Kidron. Some of the places of idolatrous worship were allowed to remain, but there is no indication that they were used by the people of Judah. The peace

which followed the great reformation continued for twenty years. (See 2 Chron. 15: 13-19.)

The later record of Asa did not always show the kind of faith which we have seen during the time of his reformatory movements. There were at least two instances in his later life in which he relied on men for help, rather than on Jehovah; and this should be a most helpful lesson to us. (Read 2 Chron. 16: 1-14.)

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

Introduction

What was Asa's relative position among the kings of Judah?

What lesson in character do we learn from him and his predecessors?

How long did Asa reign and how did he rank with others in this respect?

What is known of the first decade of his reign?

In what way did he manifest his faith in Jehovah?

What lesson should we learn from him in this respect?

The Prophet's Message to Asa

In what way did Jehovah make his will known to Asa and others of that period?

Why was that necessary?

Is it possible for man to do God's will without revelation? Give reasons for your answer.

Under what circumstances did the prophet speak to Asa?

What was the principal purpose of the message?

What assurance do people always have when they seek Jehovah?

Is it possible for one to be deceived in this respect? Give reason for your answer.

What always grows out of man's free moral agency?

How did Azariah illustrate the truthfulness of his message to Asa?

When were the people of Israel without the true God?

What happened to them in due time?

Show that it is a blessing to man that he can't always be at peace while in sin.

What exhortation and promise were contained in Azariah's message to Asa?

The King's Renewed Zeal in Religious Reforms

What was the general effect of the prophet's words upon the king?

Why is courage required in trying to lead people out of wrongdoing?

What encouragement regarding idolatry had the people of Asa's day had?

What lesson is there in this for our day?

In what way did Asa "balance" his work?

What lesson did Jesus teach on this same general subject?

Discuss its application for today.

Asa and the People Join in a Covenant to Serve Jehovah

What other people came to Asa and why? Show that this same principle is applicable in our day.

What were the great steps in the church's falling away and restoration?

Why is the Restoration Movement so important to us?

Why did Asa and the people assemble themselves in Jerusalem in the third month?

In what way did they show their gratefulness to Jehovah?

What always happens regarding the subject of offerings when people really turn to the Lord? Give reasons for your answer.

What twofold covenant did they make at that time?

How were the people affected by it?

What did Asa do to demonstrate his faith?

What response did the Lord make to him and the people?

What defect was later seen in the life of Asa?

Lesson III—January 20, 1963

THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH

Lesson Text

2 Kings 18: 1-7; 2 Chron. 32: 27-30

1 Now it came to pass in the third year of Ho-she'-a son of E'-lah king of Is'-ra-el, that Hez-e-ki'-ah the son of A'-haz king of Ju'-dah began to reign.

2 Twenty and five years old was

he when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Je-ru'-sa-lem: and his mother's name was A'-bi the daughter of Zech-a-ri'-ah.

3 And he did that which was right

in the eyes of Je-ho'-vah, according to all that David his father had done.

4 He removed the high places, and brake the pillars, and cut down the A-she'-rah: and he brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Mo'-ses had made; for unto those days the children of Is-ra-el did burn incense to it; and he called it Ne-hush'-tan.

5 He trusted in Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'ra-el; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Ju'-dah, nor among them that were before him.

6 For he clave to Je-ho'-vah; he departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which Je-ho'-vah commanded Mo'-ses.

7 And Je-ho'-vah was with him; whithersoever he went forth he prospered: and he rebelled against the

king of As-syr'-i-a, and served him not.

27 And Hez-e-ki'-ah had exceeding much riches and honor: and he provided him treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of goodly vessels;

28 Store-houses also for the increase of grain and new wine and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and flocks in folds.

29 Moreover he provided him cities, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance; for God had given him very much substance.

30 This same Hez-e-ki'-ah also stopped the upper spring of the waters of Gi-hon, and brought them straight down on the west side of the city of David. And Hez-e-ki'-ah prospered in all his works.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” (Psalm 46: 1.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Isa. 37: 14-23.

Daily Bible Readings

- January 14. M..... Judah Not Always Faithful (2 Chron. 16: 1-10)
- January 15. T..... Priests of Judah (2 Chron. 26: 16-23)
- January 16. W..... Captivity of Northern Kingdom (2 Kings 18: 9-12)
- January 17. T..... Judah Invaded (2 Kings 18: 13-18)
- January 18. F..... Rebshakeh Seeks to Mislead the People (2 Kings 18: 19-37)
- January 19. S..... Isaiah Consoles the People (2 Kings 19: 1-7)
- January 20. S..... Isaiah's Prophecy (2 Kings 19: 20-34)

TIME.—726-697 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, Hezekiah, and the people.

Introduction

Hezekiah was the son and successor of Ahaz who was, if we omit the name of Athaliah, the wicked queen who usurped the throne of Judah for six years, the eleventh king of the southern kingdom, and therefore making Hezekiah the twelfth ruler of that nation. Ahaz was weak, wicked, and superstitious; and he did about everything he was capable of doing to destroy and bring to an end the true worship of Jehovah. He departed from all the virtues of the kings of Judah who had preceded him, and plunged into all the idolatries of the surrounding nations, "and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the nations, whom Jehovah cast out from before the children of Israel. And he sacrificed and burnt

incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree." (See 2 Kings 16: 1-4.)

With this kind of background, it is natural for one to wonder just how a twenty-five year old young man who succeeded his father on the throne could be so completely different, and that for the better. The apparent reason for this difference is to be found in the spiritual guidance which was given to him by Isaiah and Micah. It was this kind of influence that led Hezekiah to initiate a series of reforms which brought the people back to a closer walk with God. In fact, Hezekiah is conspicuous in Jewish history as the first king who is said to have attempted a religious reformation on the principles which we find laid

down in the Book of Deuteronomy. This, of course, is the only basis for a sound and acceptable reformation. It matters not in what age one may live, God's word for that age is the only acceptable authority for that age; and it is interesting to observe that other great reformers followed that pattern. Cf. Josiah, Ezra, Nehemiah, and the leaders of the current Restoration Movement, from its very beginning.

The name "Hezekiah" means *Jehovah hath strengthened*, and it was truly indicative of the character of the reign of the monarch who bore it. When danger from powerful nations threatened the kingdom of Ahaz, Isaiah assured him of divine help, but that king promptly rejected it and sought aid from a foreign power. (See Isa. 7: 1ff.; 2 Kings 16: 7-9.)

But when Hezekiah came to the throne he turned aside from all the political combinations which were possible to him, and returned to the point from which his father had departed, that is, he resolved to put his trust in God. But even the good king Hezekiah did not always

keep himself within the bounds of this resolution. In the words of Edersheim, at the beginning of his reign,

"His policy was not to have any policy, but to trust in the living God, to obey his word, and to follow his guidance. His policy was his religion, and his religion was true policy. The only occasion on which he was tempted to deviate from it was at a later time, and it well-nigh proved fatal to him, as in the sequel it certainly did to his successors. Not that Hezekiah neglected to avail himself of political combinations as they arose. Indeed, this became the source of his danger. He may have argued that not to make use of the means placed within his reach was fatalism, not faith. In this he erred. Yet he did not put his trust in such alliances. He treated them rather as means for defensive than as instruments sought for offensive purposes. The only real help which he sought was that of the living God. Thus religion was the central principle of his reign and the secret of his success." (Cf. 2 Kings 18: 13-16.)

The Golden Text

*"God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble."*

Someone has said that to read the Book of Psalms is to read the devotional history of mankind; and this is to say that this collection of poetic compositions holds within itself much of the other books of the Bible. Or, to state the same thing in other words, whatever is best and loveliest in history, prophecy, or epistle is mirrored and reflected there. The people of the Old Testament age made exactly the same kind of use that people of this age make of their hymns and spiritual songs. Cf., for example, *"What a Friend We Have in Jesus."* Read the entire Forty-sixth Psalm in its three parts: (1) verses 1-3; (2) verses 4-7; (3) verses 8-11.

The words of the golden text are a great and stirring affirmation, and they meant something to the troubled soul of that day; just as they mean something to the Lord's people of all ages. Jehovah is no remote and inaccessible Deity, far removed from the people who are daily experiencing the trials of life which are be-

yond their ability to bear alone. He is present with his people in all the exigencies of life. His constant and effectual help is available for his own in all the perplexities and complications of human experience; and not only is his help available: it is close at hand. No friend or relative can come as close to us in time of trouble as he. Cf. *"Nearer, My God, to Thee."* (See 1 Cor. 10: 13; James 1: 2-8.)

Hezekiah's experience with the Assyrians and his reliance upon Jehovah for deliverance furnish a forceful exhibition of the principle of our golden text for today. Sennacherib was the king of Assyria, and he was drunk with power. Success had been his on every side, and he decided to deal with Hezekiah for rebelling against him; and he, accordingly, sent a messenger to Jerusalem, who said, "Say ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?" When Hezekiah heard that which had been said, "he rent his clothes, and covered himself

with sackcloth, and went into the house of Jehovah"; and, having done that, he next sent a message unto his spiritual adviser Isaiah, who assured him of Divine aid. This was followed by this blasphemous message, "Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall

not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria." Upon receiving that letter, Hezekiah took it into the house of Jehovah, and spread it before Jehovah; along with an earnest prayer for help. Jehovah's answer was given through Isaiah, and the result is a matter which may be read in the inspired record. (Read 2 Kings 18: 19-9: 37.)

The Text Explained

The King: of Judah

(2 Kings 18: 1-3)

Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign. Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah. And he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, according to all that David his father had done.

It can be seen from this section of our lesson that Hezekiah came to the throne of Judah near the end of the kingdom of Israel. Hoshea was the last king to sit on the throne of Israel, and his kingdom fell in the ninth year of his reign (2 Kings 17: 6). While the sun of the northern kingdom was sinking, never to rise again, a better day was dawning for Judah with the accession of Hezekiah. Although still a young man, this new king possessed a moral character which was indispensable to moral leadership.

We are not informed as to the particular influence which started Hezekiah in the right direction. It could have been one or a combination of several factors. He had seen the sinful practices of his father, and it is possible that his mother had trained him in the right way, in spite of the idolatry which was on every side. And then, too, Hezekiah may have had an opportunity of learning more about the law of Moses than would be expected under the circumstances. This latter influence could have been due to his relationship with Isaiah and Micah. At any rate, Hezekiah "did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, according to all that David his father had done."

But whatever influenced Hezekiah

most, we know that the building of his character was no accident; for the primary element of any man's character is his controlling disposition. This principle of character development has been compared to the sap of a tree—it runs into every branch of life, and produces, shapes, and colors every part of it. If this controlling disposition, principle, or dominating factor is sensual, the result is sensuality; if it is selfish, a selfish life will follow; but if it is characterized by a sincere and earnest desire to please the Lord, a righteous life will ensue. This is enough to show the importance of making the proper choices in life. (Cf. Heb. 11: 24-26; Dan. 1: 1-8; Heb. 12: 2; 2 Cor. 5: 9.) It was not necessary for Hezekiah to follow in the footsteps of his wicked father, any more than it was essential for Hezekiah's son Manasseh to depart from his righteous father's ways.

To every man there openeth
A Way, and Ways, and a Way.
And the High Soul climbs the
High Way,
And the Low Soul gropes the Low,
And in between, on the misty
flats.
The rest drift to and fro.
But to every man there openeth
A High Way, and a Low.
And every man decideth
The way his soul shall go.

—John Oxenham.

The Royal Reformer

(2 Kings 18: 4-7)

He removed the high places, and brake the pillars, and cut down the Asherah: and he brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made; for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it; and he called it Nehushtan. The following quotation from 2 Chron. 28: 22-25 will give us some idea of the great

need for a reformation when Hezekiah came to the throne: "And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against Jehovah, this same king Ahaz. For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him; and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria helped them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel. And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of Jehovah; and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem. And in every city of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger Jehovah, the God of his fathers."

It is hardly possible therefore for one to exaggerate the unfavorable circumstances under which Hezekiah began his reign. The sixteen years during which his father had been king had witnessed almost every kind of idolatry, including that of burning his own children as a sacrifice to Moloch. "Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign; and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: and he did not that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, like David his father; but he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for the Baalim. Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom Jehovah cast out before the children of Israel. And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree." (2 Chron. 28: 1-4.)

Hezekiah began his reformation in the first month of his first year as king, and the first thing he did was to destroy the abominations which his father had set up. This was a tremendous task, but he had the help of his heavenly Father. The practical meaning of all this to us should be obvious. God's way for his people has been carefully set forth in his word, and even if our closest loved ones change that which the Lord has said in the least, we cannot be faithful to him unless we seek to undo that which they had done. "If

any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14: 26.) The term "hate," as used by Luke, is stronger than the one Matthew employed (Matt. 10: 37), where the obvious meaning is "love less." The idea in Luke is not only to love less, but actually oppose anything in one's closest relatives, as well as in one's own self, which is contrary to the will and way of Christ. (Cf. Deut. 13: 6-11; 1 Kings 15: 13.) Even something which God himself had made use of under certain circumstances must not be misused at a later time. That is why Hezekiah called the brazen serpent simply a piece of brass. (See marginal note.)

He trusted in Jehovah, the God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among them that were before him. For he clave to Jehovah; he departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which Jehovah commanded Moses. This is the reason why it is said that Hezekiah based his reformation on the law of Moses. In his second great address of the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses cautioned the people regarding the king whom they might set over them, and he had this to say regarding the king himself: "And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests and the Levites: and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear Jehovah his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them; that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children, in the midst of Israel." (Deut. 17: 18-20.) Faithful adherence to all that which God commands is the mark of true greatness. (Cf. Matt. 5: 19.)

And Jehovah was with him, whithersoever he went forth he prospered; and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not. Jehovah had promised his people Divine

aid against their enemies, and this is actually what came to pass in the case of Hezekiah.

The Prosperous Ruler
(2 Chron. 32: 27-30)

And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honor: and he provided him treasures for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of goodly vessels; store-houses also for the increase of grain and new wine and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and flocks in folds. Moreover he provided him cities, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance; for God had given him very much substance. This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper spring of the waters of Gihon, and brought them straight down on the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works.

The life of Hezekiah was a forceful illustration of the truthfulness of such statements as the following: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee." (Isa. 26: 3.) "For Jehovah God is a sun and a shield: Jehovah will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." (Psalm 84: 11.) We have already seen that the prominent characteristics of Hezekiah were his trust in Jehovah, and his disposition

to follow his law implicitly. We are not surprised therefore to read of his great prosperity. This is not to say that only the righteous enjoy material prosperity, for it is a well-known fact that many wicked people are also prosperous; but there is a vast difference between mere prosperity and prosperity with God's blessings upon it.

The personal character and endowments of Hezekiah were illustrious. His accomplishments were in many fields, in addition to his reformation. The pool of Siloam (John 9: 7) is thought by many Bible students to have resulted from Hezekiah's stopping the upper spring of the waters of Gihon, and bringing them straight down to the city of Jerusalem. The psalm which he composed following the restoration from his near-fatal illness gives some idea of his ability as a poet (Isa. 38: 9-20), while the reference to him in Prov. 25: 1 indicates a further interest in literary pursuits. The reference to him in Jer. 26: 16-19 shows something of his reverence for God's word which was spoken by the prophet Micah. And although not an inspired statement, the remark of Sirach in Eccles. 49: 4 is doubtless true: "Except David and Hezekiah and Josiah, they all [that is, the kings] sinned greatly." The entire reign of Hezekiah was a glorious achievement, and he was, without a doubt, the greatest king of the southern realm.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What was Hezekiah's position in the line of the kings of Judah?
What kind of a man was his father?
How do you account for the fact that Hezekiah became such a good king?
For what is he best remembered?
Upon what did he base his reformation efforts?

Show that this was true of other reformers and restorers.
What is the meaning of the name "Hezekiah" and what indication did it give regarding his reign?
Contrast his attitude with that of his father.
Discuss the policy which governed his reign.

The Golden Text

What is the relationship of the Book of Psalms with the other parts of the Bible?

Show that the same thing is true of our hymns and spiritual songs.
Give the setting of the golden text for today.
What effect did it have on troubled souls of that day?
Show how the same principle is applicable in our day.
How was the truth of the golden text illustrated in the experience of Hezekiah?

The King of Judah

At what period in history did Hezekiah become king of Judah?
Contrast the northern and southern kingdoms at that time.
Discuss the need of a moral character for such work as Hezekiah did.
What were the possible influences in developing such a character in his case?
What is the dominant factor in character building?
Why is it so important for one to make the right choices in life?
Why do people who are closely related in the flesh often go in different moral directions?

The Royal Reformer

Why was there so great a need for reformation when Hezekiah came to the throne?
 What were some of the sinful practices of Ahaz?
 How long after he became king before Hezekiah began his reformation?
 Why was he so successful in his efforts?
 Show that the same principle is also applicable in our cases.
 Why must one "hate" his close relatives and himself in order to please the Lord?
 What disposition did Hezekiah make of

the brazen serpent which Moses had made and why?
 Why did he call it a piece of brass?
 What lesson should we learn from this?
 Why was Hezekiah a great king?
 Show that the same thing is true of people today.
 What was Jehovah's attitude toward Hezekiah.
 The Prosperous Ruler
 Why was Hezekiah so prosperous?
 Why are sinful people also often prosperous?
 Discuss the different fields in which Hezekiah showed interest and ability.

Lesson IV—January 27, 1963

JEHOSHAPHAT, A FAITHFUL MONARCH

Lesson Text

2 Chron. 17: 1-13

1 And Je-hosh'-a-phet his son reigned in his stead, and strengthened himself against Is'-ra-el.

2 And he placed forces in all the fortified cities of Ju'-dah, and set garrisons in the land of Ju'-dah, and in the cities of E'-phra-im, which A'-sa his father had taken.

3 And Je-ho'-vah was with Je-hosh'-a-phet, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto the Ba'-al-im,

4 But sought to the God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Is'-ra-el.

5 Therefore Je-ho'-vah established the kingdom in his hand; and all Ju'-dah brought to Je-hosh'-a-phet tribute; and he had riches and honor in abundance.

6 And his heart was lifted up in the ways of Je-ho'-vah: and furthermore he took away the high places and the A-shé'-rim out of Ju'-dah.

7 Also in the third year of his reign he sent his princes, even Ben-ha'-il, and O-ba-di'-ah, and Zech-a-ri'-ah, and Ne-than'-el, and Mi-ca'-iah, to teach in the cities of Ju'-dah;

8 And with them the Le'-vites,

even She-ma'-iah, and Neth-a-ni'-ah, and Zeb-a-di'-ah, and A'-sa-hel, and She-mir'-a-moth, and Je-hon'-a-than, and Ad-o-ni'-jah, and To-bi-jah, and Tob-ad-o-ni'-jah, the Levites; and with them E-lish'-a-ma and Je-ho'-ram, the priests.

9 And they taught in Ju'-dah, having the book of the law of Je-ho'-vah with them; and they went about throughout all the cities of Ju'-dah, and taught among the people.

10 And the fear of Je-ho'-vah fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Ju'-dah, so that they made no war against Je-hosh'-a-phet.

11 And some of the Phi-lis'-tines brought Je-hosh'-a-phet presents, and silver for tribute; the A-ra'-bi-ans also brought him flocks, seven thousand and seven hundred rams, and seven thousand and seven hundred he-goats.

12 And Je-hosh'-a-phet waxed great exceedingly; and he built in Ju'-dah castles and cities of store.

13 And he had many works in the cities of Ju'-dah; and men of war, mighty men of valor, in Je-ru'-sa-lem.

Golden Text.—"And Jehovah was with Jehoshaphat." (2 Chron. 17: 3.)
 Devotional Reading.—2 Chron. 18: 1-3.

Daily Bible Readings

- January 21. M. Asa and Azariah (2 Chron. 15: 1-7)
- January 22. T..... Encouragement from the Prophet (2 Chron 15: 8-15)
- January 23. W. League between Asa and Benhadad (2 Chron. 16: 1-6)
- January 24. T. Asa Rebuked by Hanani (2 Chron. 16: 7-10)
- January 25. F. Death of Asa (2 Chron. 16: 11-14)
- January 26. S. Jehoshaphat a Rich Man (2 Chron. 18: 1-3)
- January 27. S. Jehoshaphat Counsels Priests and Levites (2 Chron. 19: 8-11)

TIME.—914-889 B.C.

PLACES.—Jerusalem and the land of Judah.

PERSONS.—Jehoshaphat, his people, and some neighboring kingdoms.

Introduction

Jehoshaphat was the fourth king of Judah, and like his father Asa he was a good king. Jehoshaphat was contemporary with Ahab, king of Israel, and his two sons Ahaziah and Jehoram, both of whom reigned in the northern kingdom. Ahaziah died as a result of an accident, after two years on the throne; and was succeeded by his brother Jehoram, who was later killed by Jehu. Jehoshaphat also had a son whose name was Jehoram, who married the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel; and it was this son who succeeded his father as king of Judah. Jehoram's only living son, Ahaziah, was the next king of Judah, and at his death his mother, Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, destroyed all the seed royal, except little Joash (who later became king), and usurped the throne for six years. All of this is mentioned to show some of the bitter fruits which came from Jehoshaphat's affinity with the wicked Ahab. (2 Chron. 18: 1.)

Jehoshaphat, on the whole, was one of the best kings of Judah, in spite of some grave mistakes which he made; and it can be said to his credit that when he saw his mistakes, he usually turned at once to God and sought his pardon. He raised the kingdom to its highest point which it had reached since the disruption; but his unfortunate alliance with Ahab did much to neutralize some of his virtues; and, as we have already seen, brought ruin to his successors. Someone has said that his good talents, the benevolence of his disposition, and his generally sound

judgment, are shown not only in the great measures of domestic policy which distinguished his reign, but by the manner in which they were executed. No trace can be found in him of that pride which dishonored some and ruined others of the kings who preceded and followed him. (See *The People's Bible Encyclopedia*, p. 563f.)

The reforms which Jehoshaphat instituted resulted in destroying much of the Asherah worship, in spite of the fact that many of the high places were allowed to remain. "And he walked in all the way of Asa his father; he turned not aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah: howbeit the high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places." (1 Kings 22: 43.) The chronicler explains that the people had not set their hearts unto the God of their fathers. (See 2 Chron. 20: 33.) It is also said that Jehoshaphat made peace with the kings of Israel. (1 Kings 22: 44.) He built up a tremendous army, under competent officers; and none of the nations about him made war on him. He was vitally interested in the worship of his people, which he demonstrated in the early part of his reign, as we shall see later, by a nation-wide teaching program. Jehoshaphat, in short, was one of the most zealous of the royal reformers, and used all the power and authority of his office to protect, defend, and make practically effective the laws of Jehovah.

The Golden Text

This part of the lesson is found in the principal text, and it will be treated in its regular order.

The Text Explained

The Beginning of the Godly Reign of Jehoshaphat

(2 Chron. 17: 1-6)

And Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead, and strengthened himself against Israel. And he placed forces in all the fortified cities of

Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim, which Asa his father had taken. It was approximately sixty years after the division of the kingdom when Jehoshaphat came to the throne. War between the two king-

doms had been going on practically all of that time. But a few years before the death of Asa, the kingdom of Israel was divided by warring factions (1 Kings 16: 21f) which greatly weakened it, and thereby made it possible for the smaller kingdom of Judah to have the advantage. This was the background of the statement that Jehoshaphat "strengthened himself against Israel." This was done by placing units of his army in all the principal cities of Judah, and in all the cities of Ephraim which his father had taken from the northern kingdom, as well as setting up military installations wherever they were needed in the open country. This was especially true along the border between the two kingdoms.

And Jehovah was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto the Baalim, but sought to the God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel. The "first ways" of David have reference to the earlier part of his life, before the dark clouds of sin, such as those in connection with his relationship with Bath-sheba, hovered over him. But David's life, on the whole, was acceptable to Jehovah; because when he did fall into sin he turned to Jehovah for pardon. There is no record of his ever going after the Baalim or other idols of his day, and that also was true of Jehoshaphat, as the text now under consideration affirms. In other words, Jehoshaphat imitated the best in David's life, and also kept himself free from all forms of idol-worship, such as characterized Israel.

But that was not all that Jehoshaphat did: he sought after the God of his father, and walked in his commandments, which is to say that in following in the ways of David he was following him to the extent that he followed Jehovah. (Cf. 1 Cor. 11: 1.) It is always a great blessing to anyone to have the godly example of his forebears and other upright people. It is, indeed, a rare privilege to have been born in the line of a faithful Christian parentage. There is in such a relationship much more than godly example and wise and faithful instruction. There is also, as someone has pointed out, tendencies in character development which spring from the line of natural de-

scend. It is a wonderful blessing therefore to have had that fountain of our moral being purified and vitalized by this gracious law of God's government.

Therefore Jehovah established the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat tribute; and he had riches and honor in abundance. It appears to have been customary among the people of Israel to offer gifts to the king at the beginning of his reign (cf. 1 Sam. 10: 27), and these were probably intended for the royal splendor of the king, as well as for the maintenance of his kingdom. The King James Version has *presents* instead of *tribute*. (Cf. verse 11.) But regardless of the nature of that which Judah brought to their king, and as a result "he had riches and honor in abundance." This also shows that Jehoshaphat had the confidence and support of his entire realm. It was because of this righteous attitude on the part of this godly man that Jehovah "established the kingdom in his hand."

And his heart was lifted up in the ways of Jehovah: and furthermore he took away the high places and the Asherim out of Judah. After reading so often of one's heart being lifted up with pride, it is refreshing to read of a man's heart being "lifted up in the ways of Jehovah." The practical meaning of this is that he brought his heart into the work, because of his faith and piety, and increased his zeal in seeking to do that which was pleasing to the Lord. And the more he sought to follow in the ways of Jehovah, the more he demonstrated his opposition to that which was displeasing to him. The piety and energy which Jehoshaphat displayed made him more like David than any other of the kings of Judah, with the possible exception of Hezekiah.

His Great Teaching Program (2 Chron. 17: 7-9)

Also in the third year of his reign he sent his princes, even Ben-hail, and Obadiah, and Zechariah, and Nethanel, and Micaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah; arid with them the Levites, even Shemaiah, and Nethaniah, and Zebadiah, and Asahel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehonathan, and Adonijah, and Tobijah, and Tobadonijah, the Levites; and with

them Elishama and Jehoram, the priests. And they taught in Judah, having the book of the law of Jehovah with them; and they went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught among the people.

As may be seen by the reading of this section of our lesson, there were three classes of men who were sent on this teaching mission, namely, (1) the princes; (2) the Levites; and (3) the priests. Adam Clarke thinks that we are justified in supposing that the princes were concerned with instructing the people regarding the nature of the civil law and the constitution of the kingdom; that the Levites instructed them in everything which pertained to the temple service and ritual law; and that the priests taught them with reference to the nature and design of the religion which they professed. It was in this way that the nation as a whole became thoroughly instructed in their duty to God, to the king, and to each other.

There were five princes, nine Levites, and two priests sent forth on this teaching mission into all the cities of Judah; and it was the first such effort which was adopted by any of the kings, so far as the record is concerned. The people of Israel were for a long time "without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law" (2 Chron. 15: 3); and it is fair to assume that Judah had not received the instruction which God had authorized. Someone has made this wise observation: "Let all our business be to know God: the more one knows him, the more one desires to know him. And as knowledge is commonly the measure of love, the deeper and more extensive our knowledge shall be, the greater will be our love; and if our love of God be great, we shall love him equally in grief and in joy." This should give us some idea of the importance of faithful religious instruction.

The textbook of the itinerant ministry which we are considering was "the book of the law of Jehovah," which was either the complete law of Moses, or the Book of Deuteronomy, which was a re-statement of the law in an abridged form. (Cf. Deut. 31: 24-29; 2 Chron. 34: 14, 15.) But whatever its form, they had the law of Jehovah to teach the people, and they received it as such. There can

be no substitute for that which the Lord has spoken. When Jesus sent his disciples to tell the world about him and the salvation he had made possible, they were told to preach the gospel to the whole creation (Mark 16: 15); and when one reads the account of their work, that is, the work of the early Christians, he will see that that is precisely what they did. (Cf. Col. 1: 23.) Paul also said something about the direct effect of such preaching: "And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that, when ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe." (1 Thess. 2: 13.)

In commenting on this great program of Jehoshaphat, Isaac Errett says, "Jehoshaphat was wise in this: he saw that the work of reformation under his father did not reach to the roots of the evils that cursed the nation; it was merely or mainly an *external* change, while the *sources* of iniquity still remained untouched. Asa had sought to dry up the *streams*, but left the *fountains* still flowing. Jehoshaphat therefore determined on an advance movement. He saw that the people were profoundly ignorant of the law of Jehovah, and were consequently an easy prey to superstition. They were ignorant of the glorious history of their own nation, and consequently were destitute of the enlightened patriotism without which there could be no enthusiastic devotion to their own laws and institutions. He accordingly arranged a system of general instruction—of national education. Under the direction of five of the princes of the land, he sent forth priests and Levites 'to teach in the cities of Judah.'

"Here are the germs of a system of national education—a system far in advance of our boasted system of public schools; for, in our pride and self-sufficiency, we are banishing the Bible from our public schools, and tabooing in a large degree all moral and religious instruction, relying on merely intellectual culture to produce and foster the intelligence and virtue which are the two great pillars of the temple of liberty—although it is rapidly becoming evident that we are thus leaning vainly on a broken reed;

while Jehoshaphat saw that moral and religious culture was essential to a true patriotism, and therefore was careful to have the people 'taught in the book of the law of Jehovah.' We are not forgetful of the fact that the government of Judah was a theocracy, and that Jehoshaphat could therefore properly insist on a popular education in the law of the Lord which, in our Republic, in theory divorced from religion, and made up of all sorts of people, where the irreligious and atheistic and Jewish and pagan elements are potent, is impracticable. We see and acknowledge the difference; yet we record our conviction, in the face of this tremendous difficulty, that by *some means*—if not by the action of the State, then by the missionary zeal and voluntary efforts of the Church, our population must be morally and religiously educated, or our glorious Republic will perish. Its interests cannot be conserved by the godless culture of our public schools."

The Effects of His Reign
on Those about Him
(2 Chron. 17: 10-13)

And the fear of Jehovah fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat. And some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and silver for tribute; the Arabians also brought him flocks, seven thousand and seven hundred rams, and seven thousand and seven hundred he-goats. And Jehoshaphat waxed great exceedingly; and built in Judah castles and cities of store. And he had many works in the cities of Judah; and, men of war, mighty men of valor, in Jerusalem.

Solomon says, "When a man's ways please Jehovah, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." (Prov. 16: 7.) This does not necessarily imply that a man's enemies would approve his righteous ways; but rather that through the providence of the Lord the enemies would be subdued. Isaiah speaks in the same strain when he says,

"And all thy children shall be taught of Jehovah; and great shall be the peace of thy children. In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression,

for thou shalt not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near thee. Behold, they may gather together, but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall because of thee. Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the fire of coals, and bringeth forth a weapon for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of Jehovah, and thy righteousness which is of me, saith Jehovah." (Isa. 54: 13-17.)

The wholesome results of Jehoshaphat's program of popular education for his people was not limited to them: their surrounding neighbors also felt the effects; and as already observed in the quotations from Proverbs and Isaiah, they made no attempt to wage war against the kingdom of Judah. Instead, they demonstrated their attitude by their presents and tribute. These were powerful testimonials to the superiority and invincibility of an enlightened and righteous people. Read the Seventy-second Psalm, *The Reign of the Righteous King*, which apparently contains the dying thoughts and sentiments of David, but which was written by Solomon.

In speaking of the peace and prosperity of the righteous, we should not forget that during the Old Testament period the kingdom of God's people also had armies to forestall the threat of danger from their enemies. This was because of the physical nature of the kingdom; but no such condition exists with the kingdom of Christ. Jesus told Pilate that his "kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." (See John 18: 36.) But even righteous people today are often respected by the unrighteousness; but if they are not and are called on to suffer persecution, they are still blessed of God. (Cf. 1 Pet. 3: 13ff.) It frequently requires suffering and hardships on the part of the Lord's people in order to reach some who will not otherwise listen to the gospel; but we may be

sure that God will never forget to bless those who suffer in this way. (Cf. Matt. 10-12; Rev. 6: 9-11.)

Although the kingdom of Judah was relatively small, Jehoshaphat had a tremendous army of one million and one hundred and sixty thousand men, as may be seen by reading the remainder of the chapter from which the lesson text is taken. But even with that kind of armed force, Jehoshaphat did not forget to put his trust in Jehovah. "And Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem in the house of Jehovah,

before the new court; and he said, O Jehovah, the God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and art not thou ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? and in thy hand is power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee. . . . O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee." (Read 2 Chron. 20.) It should also be noted that the enemies came against Jehoshaphat after his unholy alliance with Ahab.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?
Repeat the golden text.
Give time, places, and persons.

Introduction

Who was Jehoshaphat and when was he king?
Who were his contemporary rulers in Israel?
What "affinity" did he make with Ahab?
What can you say of the general character of Jehoshaphat as a king?
What was his ruling motive during his reign?
Give some idea of his work as a reformer.
What is said regarding his peaceful relations with Israel?

The Beginning of the Godly Reign of Jehoshaphat

What had been the general relationship between the northern and southern kingdoms practically all the time they had existed?
How did Jehoshaphat apparently come to make peace between them?
In what way did he strengthen himself against Israel?
Why was Jehovah with Jehoshaphat?
What were the "first ways" of David?
What was Jehoshaphat's attitude toward Jehovah?
Discuss the advantages of having godly ancestors?
How did the people manifest their feeling toward their king?
What was meant by Jehoshaphat's lifting up his heart in the ways of Jehovah?
What always follows when one resolves to follow in the ways of the Lord?
How did Jehoshaphat compare with David as a king?

His Great Teaching Program

When did Jehoshaphat begin this teaching program?
Who were sent to direct it?
What were probably the special duties of each group?
Why is it so essential for people to know Jehovah?
What always follows a true knowledge of the Lord?
What textbook did those who conducted the teaching program use?
Why is it always necessary to teach God's word?
What difference is seen in the reformatory efforts of Asa and Jehoshaphat?
Why was Jehoshaphat so determined to conduct the teaching mission?
What responsibility do we have today in this respect?
How can we best carry out this work?
Why are Christians so slow to observe this?
Why can't the Lord's people rely entirely upon the public system of education?

The Effects of His Reign on Those about Him

What is meant by the fear of Jehovah?
In what way does Jehovah make a righteous man's enemies to be at peace with him?
Discuss Isaiah's testimony regarding this relationship.
How did Jehoshaphat's neighbors regard him and why?
Does the same principle of peace and prosperity apply to Christians today?
Give reasons for your answer.
What is known of the "men of war, mighty men of valor," which Jehoshaphat had in Jerusalem and Judah?
What was his real attitude in time of trouble?
Why did his enemies come up against him?

Lesson V—February 3, 1963

JOASH, THE BOY KING

Lesson Text

2 Kings 11: 9-20

9 And the captains over hundreds did according to all that Je-hoi'-a-da

the priest commanded; and they took every man his men, those that were

to come in on the sabbath, with those that were to go out on the sabbath, and came to Je-hoi'-a-da the priest.

10 And the priest delivered to the captains over hundreds the spears and shields that had been king David's, which were in the house of Je-ho'-vah.

11 And the guard stood, every man with his weapons in his hand, from the right side of the house to the left side of the house, along by the altar and the house, by the king round about.

12 Then he brought out the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony; and they made him king, and anointed him; and they clapped their hands, and said, *Long live the king.*

13 And when Ath-a-li'-ah heard the noise of the guard and of the people, she came to the people into the house of Je-ho'-vah:

14 And she looked, and, behold, the king stood by the pillar, as the manner was, and the captains and the trumpets by the king; and all the people of the land rejoiced, and blew trumpets. Then Ath-a-li'-ah rent her clothes, and cried, Treason! treason!

15 And Je-hoi'-a-da the priest commanded the captains of hundreds that were set over the host, and said

unto them, Have her forth between the ranks; and him that followeth her slay with the sword. For the priest said, Let her not be slain in the house of Je-ho'-vah.

16 So they made way for her; and she went by the way of the horses' entry to the king's house: and there was she slain.

17 And Je-hoi'-a-da made a covenant between Je-ho'-vah and the king and the people, that they should be Je-ho'-vah's people; between the king also and the people.

18 And all the people of the land went to the house of Ba'-al, and brake it down; his altars and his images brake they in pieces thoroughly, and slew Mat'-tan the priest of Ba'-al before the altars. And the priest appointed officers over the house of Je-ho'-vah.

19 And he took the captains over hundreds, and the Carites, and the guard, and all the people of the land; and they brought down the king from the house of Je-ho'-vah, and came by the way of the gate of the guard unto the king's house. And he sat on the throne of the kings.

20 So all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet. And Ath-a-li'-ah they had slain with the sword at the king's house.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, that seek him with the whole heart."* (Psalm 119: 2.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Kings 11: 1-8.

Daily Bible Readings

January 28.	M.....	Jehoash, King of Judah (2 Kings 11: 1, 2)
January 29.	T.....	Jehoash Saved from Massacre (2 Kings 11: 2, 3)
January 30.	W.....	Another Jehoash in Israel (2 Kings 13: 1-10)
January 31.	T.....	Other Joashes (1 Chron. 4: 22; 1 Kings 22: 26)
February 1.	F.....	Evil Influence of Jeroboam (2 Kings 11: 29-31)
February 2.	S.....	Oppression of Israel (2 Kings 11: 32-36)
February 3.	S.....	Reign of Jehoash (2 Kings 12: 1-8)

TIME.—878-839 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jehoiada, Joash, Athaliah, and the temple guards.

Introduction

Joash, the abbreviation of Jehoash, was the seventh king of Judah, in the royal lineage of David. His grandmother Athaliah usurped the throne for six years, immediately preceding his reign, but she is not counted in the royal lineage of the kings of Judah. When Joash came to the throne, he was the sole sur-

vivor of the descendants of David who were entitled to reign as king over the southern kingdom. Jehoram, the son and successor of Jehoshaphat, was married to Athaliah the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel; and when Jehu executed Jehovah's decree to destroy the house of Ahab, Jehoram's son and successor, Aha-

ziah, was one of the victims. (See 2 Kings 8: 18; 9: 27, 28.) All the other sons of Jehoram were destroyed by the invading Philistines and Arabians. (2 Chron. 21: 16, 17; 22: 1.)

After the death of Ahaziah, his mother Athaliah murdered all the heirs to the throne, except Joash. "Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal. But Jehosheba, the daughter of king Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king's sons that were slain, even him and his nurse, and put them in the bed-chamber; and they hid him from Athaliah, so that he was not slain; and he was with her hid in the house of Jehovah six years. And Athaliah reigned over the land." (2 Kings 11: 1-3.) Jehosheba, also called Jehoshebeah, was, in addition to being the king's sister and aunt of Joash, the wife of Jehoiada the priest. (See 2 Chron. 22: 10-12.)

The first part of the long reign of Joash was commendable. This was due to the godly influence of Jehoiada the priest; but after his death the king's attitude was greatly changed. "Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king.

Then the king hearkened unto them. And they forsook the house of Jehovah, the God of their fathers, and served the Asherim and the idols: and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their guiltiness. Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto Jehovah; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear.

"And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest; and he stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of Jehovah, so that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken Jehovah, he hath also forsaken you. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of Jehovah. Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son. And when he died, he said, Jehovah look upon it, and require it." (2 Chron. 24: 17-22.) If, as some Bible students think, the words "son of Barachiah" in Matt. 23: 35 were added by a later copyist (cf. Luke 11: 51), this could have been the same person about whom we have just read. There is, of course, no way for us to know for certain.

The Golden Text

"Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, that seek him with the whole heart" The psalm from which this text is taken begins with these words, "Blessed are they that are perfect in the way, who walk in the law of Jehovah"; and then the parallel statement of the text: "Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, that seek him with the whole heart." The remainder of the paragraph is an enlargement upon these first two verses, that is, the other verses tell something of the attitude and results which follow when people sincerely endeavor to obey Jehovah in all things. "Yea, they do not unrighteousness; they walk in his ways. Thou hast commanded us thy precepts, that we should observe them diligently. Oh that my ways were established to observe thy statutes! Then shall I not be put to shame, when I have respect unto all thy

commandments. I will give thanks unto thee with uprightness of heart, when I learn thy righteous judgments. I will observe thy statutes: Oh forsake me not utterly."

Paul told the Athenians that God "made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being." (See Acts 17: 26-28.) This passage shows that the seeking after God should be the primary aim of every responsible person; for he is the Author of our being, the Supporter of our very existence, the Source of all our advantages, and the Giver of every good thing which we enjoy. It becomes us therefore that we should seek Jehovah that we may

understand something of his ways and his grace which he desires to bestow upon us; and so that we may bring our emptiness to him for his fullness, our poverty for his riches, our darkness for his light, and that we may receive his help for our every need. (Cf. Heb. 4: 14-16.)

The "testimonies" of Jehovah are those things which he has revealed for our instruction and guidance; and it is, of course, necessary for us to *seek* them before we can keep them. No one can keep that which he does not have; and no one can really have the testimonies of the Lord who does not heartily embrace them by his affections. Paul implies as much when he says, "Because they received not

the *love of the truth*, that they might be saved." (See 2 Thess. 2: 8-12.) It is not enough to know the truth; we must love the truth; and this, in turn, means that we will endeavor to the best of our ability to do that which the truth enjoins upon us. (Cf. 1 John 5: 3.) The "whole heart" includes the intellect, the affections, the will power, and the conscience, which means that in addition to having an understanding of the truth and loving it, we must be determined to obey it. This will insure a clear or good conscience for all who are thus about the Lord's business. If we keep God's testimonies in this way, they will most certainly keep us.

The Text Explained

Joash Made King

(2 Kings 11: 9-12)

And the captains over hundreds did according to all that Jehoiada the priest commanded; and they took every man his men, those that were to come in on the sabbath, with those that were to go out on the sabbath, and came to Jehoiada the priest. And the priest delivered to the captains over hundreds the spears and shields that had been king David's, which were in the house of Jehovah.

Although he is not expressly called so, it is very probable that Jehoiada was the high priest, and if so, he had a great responsibility in seeing that the divine order was recognized and maintained. We have no way of knowing just how long the plans which he proposed had been in his mind, or how he came to be moved to action at the time of this lesson. It could have been that the will of God was in some way made known to him, either by a prophet, the Urim and Thummin, or in some other way. (Cf. Num. 27: 21; 1 Sam. 28: 6.) The ungodly rule of Athaliah for six years must have brought untold grief to Jehoiada and all who were desirous of obeying Jehovah; for it is certain that she did everything she could to destroy all reverence for God. "For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up the house of God; and also all the dedicated things of the house of Jehovah did they bestow upon the Baalim." (2 Chron. 24: 7.)

When it was decided to bring to an

end the reign of the wicked usurper, Jehoiada called together the commanders of the executioners and other personnel of the temple guard, and made a covenant with them, which was bound by an oath in the house of Jehovah; and he then showed them the lawful heir to the throne of Judah. "And he commanded them, saying, This is the thing that ye shall do: a third part of you, that come in on the sabbath, shall be keepers of the watch of the king's house; and a third part shall be at the gate Sur; and a third part at the gate behind the guard: so shall ye keep the watch of the house, and be a barrier. And the two companies of you, even all that go forth on the sabbath, shall keep the watch of the house of Jehovah about the king. And ye shall compass the king round about, every man with his weapons in his hand; and he that cometh within the ranks, let him be slain: and be ye with the king when he goeth out, and when he cometh in." (2 Kings 11: 5-8.)

David had divided the priests and Levites into twenty-four courses, and each served a week in turn in the temple, beginning on the sabbath of each week. This made it necessary for some to "come in on the sabbath," and some to "go out on the sabbath." Jehoiada apparently chose the sabbath for the time of action because that was the day when the people came together, and the assembly of those who were a part of the plan in question would not be noticed as being something unusual. It is also very

probable that those who were being directed by Jehoiada came unarmed, since they were supplied out of the arsenal in the house of Jehovah. The weapons which were given to the men under order had belonged to David, and that fact no doubt had great psychological effect, since David was their great ancestor and hero, and the one to whom Jehovah vouchsafed the kingdom. And, too, the memory of David as a great warrior was a powerful incentive.

And the guard stood, every man with his weapons in his hand, from the right side of the house to the left side of the house, along by the altar and the house, by the king round about. Then he brought out the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony; and they made him king, and anointed him; and they clapped their hands, and said, Long live the king.

Thus with the guard at attention and alert to any possible danger, Joash was duly crowned king. The "testimony" which was given to the new king was the law which Moses authorized the reigning monarch to have with him at all times. "And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests and the Levites: and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear Jehovah his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them; that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children, in the midst of Israel." (Deut. 17: 18-20.)

This principle cannot be emphasized too much. Those who are charged with the leadership of God's people must have his word before them at all times, and they must understand it and do their best to follow its teaching. When Paul addressed the Ephesian elders, he said, "And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified." (Acts 20: 32.) The king of Judah was not crowned for his personal glory, nor is any

person today made a leader in the church to satisfy his own desires. God has a work for all such people to do; and the only way they can do it so as to please God, is for them to have his word before them at all times, and make every effort to do exactly as it requires.

Athaliah's Cry of Treason

(2 Kings 11: 13-16)

And when Athaliah heard the noise of the guard and of the people, she came to the people into the house of Jehovah: and she looked, and behold, the king stood by the pillar, as the manner was, and the captains and the trumpets by the king; and all the people of the land rejoiced, and blew trumpets. Then Athaliah rent her clothes, and cried, Treason! treason!

It would be natural to suppose that it was in the plan of Jehoiada to deal appropriately with Athaliah after the new king was properly installed; but, as Matthew Henry suggests, she saved him the trouble of going after her. When Athaliah heard the noise in connection with the coronation, she came out of her place to see what it was all about; all of which indicates that she was both suspicious and had no close ally who would inform her or whom she might send to make an investigation. But when she reached the people, it did not take her long to see what was taking place.

Although Athaliah had done all that she could to defeat the purposes of God in keeping a son of David on the throne of Judah, she did not hesitate to cry, Treason! treason! when she saw that her rule was coming to an end. The original word for "treason" means to conspire or bind together for the purpose of accomplishing some objective, in this case the removal of the usurper; but the term was not the proper one to describe the actions of Jehoiada and those who were helping him. They were simply trying to restore law and order in the kingdom. Josephus says that "when Athaliah saw the child standing upon a pillar, with the royal crown upon his head, she rent her clothes, and cried out vehemently, and commanded [her guards] to kill him that had laid snares for her, and endeavored to deprive her

of the government." But as is usually the case, the greatest offender is the first to cry, Treason, when the tide turns against him. Or, to state the same thing in other words, those with the greatest guilt are the first to reproach those who seek to do right. (Cf. 2 Kings 9: 23.)

And Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of hundreds that were set over the host, and said unto them, Have her forth between the ranks; and him that followeth her slay with the sword. For the priest said, Let her not be slain in the house of Jehovah. So they made way for her; and she went by the way of the horses' entry to the king's house: and there she was slain.

Thus, instead of allowing the wicked usurper to die in the temple precincts, she was apparently slain near the stables which housed the horses. Turning again to the record of Josephus, we read, "But Jehoiada called for the captains of hundreds, and commanded them to bring Athaliah to the valley of Cedron, and slay her there, for he would not have the temple defiled with the punishments of this pernicious woman; and he gave order, that if any one came near to help her, he should be slain also; wherefore those that had the charge of her slaughter took hold of her, and led her to the gate of the king's mules, and slew her there." The "valley of Cedron" is the same as the "brook Kidron"; and the following passages will give some idea of manner in which it was regarded by the Lord's people: 1 Kings 15: 13; 2 Kings 23: 4-6; 2 Chron. 29: 16; 30: 14.

The Covenant between Jehovah, the King, and the People (2 Kings 11: 17-20)

And Jehoiada made a covenant between Jehovah and the king and the people, that they should be Jehovah's people; between the king also and the people. And all the people of the land went to the house of Baal, and brake it down; his altars and his images brake they in pieces thoroughly, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. The first thing which Jehoiada did was to make a general covenant between Jehovah, the Supreme Ruler, the new king, as his viceroy, and the people, that they should all be Jehovah's people, each

being bound to live in accordance with the Divine law. A particular covenant was then made between the king and the people, a consequence of the general covenant, which bound the king to rule according to God's law, and the people to submit to him as Jehovah's representative. The immediate fruit of these covenants was the destruction of Baal worship and the execution of his priest.

And the priest appointed officers over the house of Jehovah. And he took the captains over hundreds, and the Carites, and the guard, and all the people of the land; and they made brought down the king from the house of Jehovah, and came by the way of the gate of the guard unto the king's house. And he sat on the throne of the kings. So all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet. And Athaliah they had slain with the sword at the king's house.

The mere destruction of idolatry was not enough; the true worship of Jehovah had to be restored before any true reformation was effected; and that was what Jehoiada set about doing. And then at the proper time, and with an appropriate escort, the king was taken from the house of Jehovah, where he had been kept in secrecy for six years, to the king's house, from which he was to rule in accordance to the promise which Jehovah had made to David.

It may have seemed to God's people, during the tyrannical reign of Athaliah, that God's promise that a son of David would sit on his throne had failed; but it must never be forgotten that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." (2 Pet. 3: 8.) In the words of the psalmist, "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel will neither slumber nor sleep." (Psalm 121: 3, 4.) William Cullen Bryant expressed the matter in these words:

Truth, crushed to earth, shall rise
again—

Th' eternal years of God are hers;
But Error, wounded, writhes in pain,
And dies among his worshippers.

Athaliah probably thought that she had destroyed all the seed royal, but she failed to take into account the

fact that Jehovah had made a promise regarding the royal succession which she could not make of non-effect. And, too, she never learned the lesson which Mordecai later impressed upon Esther, to the effect that she would not escape destruction, just because she was in the king's house (Esth. 4: 13f); for that is exactly what happened to the wicked usurper. Let us all therefore remember that the Lord is ever able

to care for his own, and that we can rely with perfect confidence upon anything which he has spoken, regardless of the evil which may be around us. "For how many soever be the promises of God, in him is the yea: wherefore also through him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us." (2 Cor. 1: 20.) The tragic end of Joash should be carefully read by everyone. (2 Kings 12: 17-21; 2 Chron. 24: 23-27.)

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today?
Repeat the golden text.
Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Who was Joash?
Why was he crowned king while he was so young?
Under what circumstances did he spend the first years of his life?
Give some facts regarding his reign as king.
Why did he depart from the Lord during the latter years of his life?

The Golden Text

Discuss the setting of the golden text.
What does it mean to keep the testimonies of Jehovah?
What is necessary before one can do that?
What are the results which follow diligent obedience to God's will?
What does it mean for one to seek Jehovah with his *whole* heart?
What should be the primary aim of every responsible being? Why?
Why isn't it enough simply to know the truth?

Joash Made King

Who was Jehoiada?
Discuss his plans for making Joash king.
Tell something of the nature of Athaliah's reign.
Why did Jehoiada select the sabbath for the crowning of the young king?
Tell something of the influence of David in this connection.

What was given to Joash when he was made king?
Why was this so important?
What application does this principle have in our day?
Upon what basis are people made leaders in God's service?

Athaliah's Cry of Treason

How did Athaliah learn of what was taking place in the house of Jehovah?
Why hadn't some one told her about the matter?
Why did she cry, Treason! treason!
What does it mean for one to be guilty of treason?
What command did Jehoiada give regarding Athaliah?
Why didn't he want her killed in the house of Jehovah?
Where was she killed and how did she reach the spot?

The Covenant between Jehovah, the King, and the People

What was the covenant which was made on this occasion?
Discuss its two aspects.
What results followed immediately?
What is essential to a true reformation?
Under what circumstances was Joash brought into the king's house?
What lesson should we learn regarding God's promises from Athaliah's usurpation of the throne of Judah?
What did she fail to take into account in her calculations?
Why wasn't she safe in the king's house?
What does Paul teach us regarding God's promises?

Lesson VI—February 10, 1963

THE SIN OF UZZIAH

Lesson Text

2 Chron. 26: 8-21

8 And the Am'mon-ites gave tribute to Uz-zi'-ah: and his name spread abroad even to the entrance of E'-gypt; for he waxed exceeding strong.

9 Moreover Uz-si'-ah built towers in Je-ru'-sa-lem at the corner gate, and at the valley gate, and at the turning of the wall, and fortified them.

10 And he built towers in the wilderness, and hewed out many cisterns, for he had much cattle; in the lowland also, and in the plain: *and he had* husbandmen and vinedressers in the mountains and in the fruitful fields; for he loved husbandry.

11 Moreover Uz-si'-ah had an army of fighting men, that went out to war by bands, according to the

number of their reckoning made by Je-i'-el the scribe and Ma-a-se'-iah the officer, under the hand of Han-a-ni'-ah, one of the king's captains.

12 The whole number of the heads of fathers' houses, even the mighty men of valor, was two thousand and six hundred.

13 And under their hand was an army, three hundred thousand and seven thousand and five hundred, that made war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy.

14 And ūċ-ċī'-ah prepared for them, even for all the host, shields, and spears, and helmets, and coats of mail, and bows, and stones for slinging.

15 And he made in Je-ru'-sa-lem engines, invented by skilful men, to be on the towers and upon the battlements, wherewith to shoot arrows and great stones. And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong.

16 But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up, so that he did corruptly, and he trespassed against Je-ho'-vah his God; for he went into the temple of Je-ho'-vah to bum incense upon the altar of incense.

17 And Az-a-ri'-ah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore

priests of Je-ho'-vah, that were valiant men:

18 And they withstood Uz-zi'-ah the king, and said unto him, It pertaineth not unto thee, Uz-zi'-ah, to burn incense unto Je-ho'-vah, but to the priests the sons of Aar'-on, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honor from Je-ho'-vah God.

19 Then Uz-zi'-ah was wroth; and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense; and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy brake forth in his forehead before the priests in the house of Je-ho'-vah, beside the altar of incense.

20 And Az-a-ri'-ah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leperous in his forehead, and they thrust him out quickly from thence; yea, himself hastened also to go out, because Je-ho'-vah had smitten him.

21 And ūċ-ċī'-ah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a separate house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of Je-ho'-vah: and Jo'-tham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land.

Golden Text.—*"Pride goeth before destruction."* (Prov. 16: 18.)

Devotional Reading.—2 Chron. 26: 22, 23.

Daily Bible Readings

February 4. M.....	Uzziah Made King (2 Chron. 26: 1-7)
February 5. T.....	Azariah's Reign (2 Kings 15: 1-7)
February 6. W.....	Conditions in Israel (2 Kings 15: 8-12)
February 7. T.....	Kings of Israel (2 Kings 15: 13-27)
February 8. F.....	Hoshea's Conspiracy (2 Kings 15: 29-31)
February 9. S.....	Jotham's Wicked Reign (2 Kings 16: 1-4)
February 10. S.....	Description of Israel's Evil Ways (2 Kings 17: 1-18)

Time.—810-759 B.C.

Place.—Jerusalem.

Persons.—Uzziah, Azariah the priest, and Others.

Introduction

Uzziah was the ninth in the line of the descendants of David to sit upon the throne of Judah. Both his grandfather Joash and his father Amaziah were good kings at the beginning of their reigns, but both of them manifested an unfortunate and unrighteous attitude in their later life, and both of them were killed. The accounts of the kings of this period are found in the Books of Second Kings and Second Chronicles, and these

records are both parallel and supplemental. The annals of those kings not only enable us to know something of their times and activities, but they also suggest to us many valuable lessons for our own times. It is a well known fact that human nature has been fairly constant throughout all ages; and it is for that reason that the things which "were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and

through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope." (See Rom. 15: 4.)

After the death of his father, "all the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in the room of his father Amaziah." (2 Chron. 26: 1.) Uzziah is called *Azariah* in 2 Kings 14:21. Some Bible students consider this an error of a copyist which has been perpetuated, while others are of the opinion that the new king simply changed his name when he came to the throne. But whatever may be the truth regarding this, it remains a fact that practically all we know of him is under the name of Uzziah. His reign was a long one, the second longest in Judah, being exceeded only by Manasseh whose tenure of office was three years longer—fifty-two and fifty-five years, respectively.

Some of the unwise attitudes and actions of Uzziah's father had resulted in the weakening of the king-

dom of Judah, but that was soon overcome by Uzziah who began his reign by a successful expedition against his father's enemies, and before the tide had reached its height the southern kingdom was raised to a condition of prosperity which it had not known since the days of Solomon. "And he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. And he set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the vision of God: and as long as he sought Jehovah, God made him to prosper." (2 Chron. 26: 4, 5.) We are not informed as to the identity of this Zechariah. It was during the reign of Uzziah that an earthquake which was apparently very serious occurred; for it was referred to by both Amos (1: 1) and Zechariah (14: 5) as a chronological epoch and as a convulsion from which the people fled. (Cf. Isa. 1: 1; 6: 1.)

The Golden Text

"Pride goeth before destruction"

The two clauses of the verse from which this text is taken contain a splendid example of Hebrew poetic parallelism, which is so common in the Old Testament. Both clauses are similarly constructed, and one reiterates the thought which is contained in the other. The entire verse is as follows:

Pride goeth before destruction,
And a haughty spirit before a fall.

It is easy to see that "pride" and "a haughty spirit" in the two parts of the sentence are personified; and that they are both certain to leave disaster in their path. The Hebrews considered this the middle verse of the Book of Proverbs; and it has been called a fitting keystone to the whole.

All pride, in and of itself, is not necessarily evil. No one can maintain the dignity which should characterize him, unless he has some pride. There is eating in gluttony, and drinking in drunkenness; but it is not the eating and the drinking as such which must be blamed, but the excess. Just so with pride. Someone has observed that pride, like Laudanum and other poisonous medicines, is beneficial in small quantities; but

exceedingly injurious in large doses. No man who does not have some pride in himself can be pleasing to others. George Eliot has noted that "we mortals, men and women, devour many a disappointment between breakfast and dinner-time; keep back the tears and look a little pale about the lips, and in answer to inquiries say, Oh, nothing!" Pride helps us; and pride is not a bad thing when it only urges us to hide our own hurts—not to hurt others."

It is, however, the other side of pride which is emphasized in the golden text; and if we are willing to make the comparison, we can easily see something of the evils of pride by carefully considering the good side. Defoe called pride in its bad sense "the first peer and president of hell"; and that appears to have been well spoken. Richard Newton gave what he considered the history of pride in three chapters, namely, its beginning in heaven, its continuance on earth, and its end in hell. This is, of course, the history of the devil. While the Bible does not say so in so many words, the inference is that Satan was originally an angel who, because of his pride, was cast out of heaven; and it is for this reason that it is

thought that the history of pride is the history of the devil. (Cf. 1 Tim. 3: 6.) The following passages give

some idea of the Lord's attitude toward pride: Isa. 14: 12-15; Ezek. 28 11-15; 1 Pet. 5: 5-7.

The Text Explained

Jerusalem Fortified and the Country Developed (2 Chron. 26: 8-10)

And the Ammonites gave tribute to Uzziah: and his name spread abroad even to the entrance of Egypt; for he waxed exceeding strong. The reign of Uzziah was in marked contrast with that of his father Amaziah, as may be seen by reading the chapter which precedes the one from which our lesson text is taken. Uzziah, in fact, was one of the ablest who ruled over Judah. The inspired historian tells us that "he went forth and warred against the Philistines, and break down the wall of Gath, and the wall of Jabneh, and the wall of Ashdod, and among the Philistines. And God helped him against the Philistines, and against the Arabians that dwelt in Gur-baal, and the Meunim." (2 Chron. 26: 6, 7.) The places named in the verses just quoted were to the south and southwest of Judah, and the Ammonites whom he forced to pay tribute to him were east of the Jordan.

All of this goes to show something of the great influence which Uzziah had on all heathen countries about him. And it should be observed that his name, which was known even to the entrance of Egypt, was a good name. He was seeking to do the will of God, and God was helping him. This is another example of Jehovah's making the enemies of a man who pleases him to be at peace with him. (Cf. Prov. 16: 7; 2 Chron. 17: 10.) This was especially true during Old Testament times, when Jehovah used nations to chastise other peoples. The presence of the heathen nations in the promised land was due to the sinfulness of the chosen people; and so when a king like Uzziah sought after Jehovah, these other people were brought under subjection to the Lord's people.

Moreover Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the corner gate, and at the valley gate, and at the turning of the wall, and fortified them. And he built towers in the wilderness, and hewed out many cisterns, for he had much cattle; in the lowland also, and

in the plain: and he had husbandmen and vinedressers in the mountains and in the fruitful fields; for he loved husbandry.

Thus it can be seen that King Uzziah did not depend entirely upon his offensive actions; he gave due consideration to the home-front as well. When Amaziah sought a fight with the king of Israel, "Judah was put to the worse before Israel; and they fled every man to his tent. And Joash king of Israel took Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Joash the son of Jehohaz, at Beth-shemesh, and brought him to Jerusalem, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem from the gate of Ephraim unto the corner gate, four hundred cubics." (2 Chron. 25: 22, 23.) This probably accounted for the building of the towers, and their fortification, on the part of Uzziah.

But Uzziah did not stop with making his capital city strong; he fortified the countryside too. This was done to protect the people who lived in those sections of the kingdom, along with their livestock, crops, and vineyards. The king himself took a great interest in stock-raising and farming, and that no doubt encouraged the people generally to do likewise. Uzziah did not delight in wars, nor did he spend the major portion of his time in sports and pleasure. Instead, he loved the honorable calling of husbandry, which not only was profitable to him, but also enabled him and his people to live better.

An Account of Uzziah's Military Might

(2 Chron. 26: 11-15)

Moreover Uzziah had an army of fighting men, that went out to war by bands, according the number of their reckoning made by Jeiel the scribe and Maaseiah the officer, under the hand of Hananiah, one of the king's captains. The whole number of the heads of fathers' houses, even the mighty men of valor, was two thousand and six hundred. And under their hand was an army, three hundred thousand and seven thousand and five hundred, that made war with mighty power, to help the king

against the enemy. And Uzziah prepared for them, even for all the host, shields, and spears, and helmets, and coats of mail, and bows, and stones for slinging. And he made in Jerusalem, engines, invented by skilful men, to be on the towers and upon the battlements, wherewith to shoot arrows and great stones. And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong.

The "army of fighting men" indicates that they were well trained for that which they were expected to do. There were twenty-six hundred officers, and three hundred and seven thousand and five hundred men, who were able to war with mighty power. These helped Uzziah against his enemies; and it is well to note that he saw to it that they were well equipped for their mission. This is the first mention in history of machines which were made for throwing projectiles, and it appears that they were invented and produced for the first time during the reign of Uzziah. The soldiers of Uzziah did not go out against their enemies as a united army; instead, they engaged in guerrilla warfare, and that apparently only as needed to "help the king against the enemy."

War, as such, has never been pleasing to God; but as long as men lust and are jealous of each other, wars will have to be fought. During the Mosaic dispensation the kingdom of Israel, and Judah after the kingdom was divided, was frequently used by Jehovah to punish wicked nations; but when the kingdom of Christ was established that situation changed. In speaking of the spiritual kingdom, Isaiah said, "And he will judge between the nations, and will decide concerning many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Isa. 2: 4.) This, of course, can be, only as people turn to the Lord and his way of life. As long as men seek to have their own way, there will be wars and rumors of wars. It is nothing short of appalling to think of the invention and production of war machines from the days of Uzziah till this.

A Daring Invasion Severely Punished (2 Chron. 26: 16-21)

But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up, so that he did corruptly, and he trespassed against Jehovah his God; for he went into the temple of Jehovah to burn incense upon the altar of incense. The attitude and action of King Uzziah is one of the most forceful illustrations on record of the golden text of this lesson. Worldly prosperity is often the forerunner of daring impiety. It has already been pointed out that Uzziah was a good king, and this is the only blot against his name; but it is such as was not charged against any other king of Judah. Several of the other kings were guilty of such heinous crimes as adultery, oppression, murder, persecution, and idolatry, but none of these was charged against Uzziah; and yet in his transgression against Jehovah he was guilty of a sin so charged with emotions as to involve an isolated and lingering punishment to the day of his death.

And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of Jehovah, that were valiant men: and they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It pertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto Jehovah, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honor from Jehovah God.

Uzziah's sin was the sin of presumption, which David called *great transgression*: "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be clear from great transgression." (Psalm 19: 13.) As one contemplates the action of Uzziah, he is made to wonder if he still had the benefit of the wise counsel of Zechariah. However, it is clear in the light of verse 5 that if he did, he had grown too proud to heed it. There is no indication given as the occasion for the daring act of the king; only the basic cause for it, namely, his pride. "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up, so that he did corruptly."

It is interesting, as well as helpful, to note the number of barriers which Uzziah had to break through in order

to commit his crime. 1. He had to disregard the direct command of Jehovah regarding the temple worship. 2. He had to refuse to listen to the men who were divinely authorized to remonstrate with such offenders. 3. He had to despise the entire history of his people. 4. He had to defy the holy name by which he himself was called. The principle involved in this is the same one which the writer of Hebrews used to show the greatness of forsaking the assembly of the saints in Christ.

"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries. A man that hath set at nought Moses' law d i e t h without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Heb. 10: 26-29.) This was the writer's answer to those who disregarded his exhortations in the preceding verses, especially verse 25. There were barriers which should have prevented Uzziah from his great sin, and there are barriers which should keep people today from the wilful sin of forsaking the assembly of the Lord's people. (See Heb. 10: 29.) Eighty-one priests were unable to persuade Uzziah to restrain himself from violating God's law regarding the burning of incense upon the altar; and it appears that no number of faithful teachers of God's word today can prevent many professing Christians from forsaking the assembly which has been ordained of the Lord.

Then Uzziah was wroth; and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense; and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy brake forth in his forehead before the priests in the house of Jehovah, beside the altar of incense. And Azariah the chief

priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out quickly from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because Jehovah had smitten him.

Uzziah was not the last man who became angry with those who were sincerely trying to get him to respect the law of the Lord; the practice is still very common today. Even a wicked man like Felix did not become angry with Paul for condemning his sinful life; instead, he was terrified, although he did nothing to mend his ways. (See Acts 24: 25.) The Lord, of course, does not strike people with leprosy or other physical ills (cf. Acts 5: 1-11) when they disobey him; but we should learn from the examples which are recorded in the Bible something of his attitude toward such things. The punishment which awaits such sins is far worse than leprosy or physical death.

And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a separate house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of Jehovah: and Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land.

This is an inspired record of Jehovah's resisting the proud, and of his jealousy for the purity and honor of his own laws and institutions; and by it he gives fair warning to all men, both great and small, to keep their distance and show the proper respect for the things about which he has spoken. Uzziah's punishment was a loud and prolonged call to repentance, and it is very probable that he gave heed to it. He had been a man of business, and he had a love for it; but he was never again permitted to engage in it. Even his son had to direct the affairs of the king's house, and judge the people of the land; for Uzziah had to dwell in a separate house. (Cf. Num. 12: 14.) It appears from the chronology which we have that Uzziah lived his lonely life for several years; and even in death he was not united with his family; for he was buried in the field of the kings, rather than in the royal sepulchres. (Cf. Rom. 6: 23.)

Questions (or Discussion

What is the subject for today?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Tell something of the family relationship of Uzziah.

What benefits are derived from reading the accounts of the kings in both the Books of Kings and Chronicles?
 Why is it important that we study those records today?
 Under what circumstances did Uzziah become king?
 How did the length of his reign compare with that of other kings of Judah?
 What was the general character of his reign?
 What spiritual counsel did he have during the first part of his reign?
 What great epochal event occurred while he was on the throne?

The Golden Text

Discuss the grammatical construction of the golden text.
 Is all pride sinful? Give reasons for your answer.

Why does destruction follow pride?
 What is the Lord's attitude toward pride?

Jerusalem Fortified and the Country Developed

Compare the reign of Uzziah with that of his father Amaziah.
 Why was Uzziah so successful against his enemies?
 Will the same principle hold good in our case? Give reasons for your answer.
 Why did Uzziah bring the neighboring nations into subjection to him?
 Why did the king fortify the walls of Jerusalem?
 What provisions did he make for the country?
 Why was he so interested in husbandry?
 An Account of Uzziah's Military Might
 What was the character of Uzziah's army with respect to training?
 How many officers and men did he have?

What type of warfare did they engage in and why?
 What important invention was made during Uzziah's reign?
 Why don't Christians fight as the people of God did under the Mosaic dispensation?
 How long can Isaiah's prophecy in this respect be fulfilled?
 What can you say of the invention and production of war machines since Uzziah's day?

A Daring Invasion Severely Punished

How did the attitude and action of Uzziah fit in with the golden text?
 Why is worldly prosperity often the forerunner of impiety?
 How did the sins of Uzziah compare with those of other kings of Judah?
 What was the nature of Uzziah's sin?
 Why is the sin of presumption so serious?
 What caused the king to commit this sin?
 Discuss some of the barriers which he had to break through in order to commit it?
 Show that the same principle is applicable to people of our day?
 What are some of the barriers which Christians must break through before committing the wilful sin of forsaking the assembly of the Lord's people?
 Who endeavored to get the king to restrain himself?
 How does the same principle work in our case?
 What attitude did Uzziah manifest toward the priest who remonstrated with him?
 What is the usual attitude of people today in this respect?
 What lesson should we learn from Uzziah's punishment?
 Why did he have to dwell alone and be buried alone?

Lesson VII—February 17, 1963

HEZEKIAH'S GREAT PASSOVER

Lesson Text

2 Chron. 30: 13-27

13 And there assembled at Je-ru'-sa-lem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great assembly.

14 And they arose and took away the altars that were in Je-ru'-sa-lem, and all the altars for incense took they away, and cast them into the brook Kid'-ron.

15 Then they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the second month: and the priests and the Le-vites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought burnt-offerings into the house of Je-ho'-vah.

16 And they stood in their place after their order, according to the law of Mó'-ses the man of God: the priests sprinkled the blood which they received of the hand of Le'-vites.

17 For there were many in the

assembly that had not sanctified themselves: therefore the Le'-vites had the charge of killing the passovers for every one that was not clean, to sanctify them unto Je-ho'-vah.

18 For a multitude of the people, even many of E'-phra-im and Ma-nas'-seh, Is'-sa-char and Zeb'-u-lun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it is written. For Hez-e-ki'-ah had prayed for them, saying, The good Je-ho'-vah pardon every one.

19 That setteth his heart to seek God, Je-ho'-vah, the God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary.

20 And Je-ho'-vah hearkened to Hez-e-ki'-ah, and healed the people.

21 And the children of Is'-ra-el that were present at Je-ru'-sa-lem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness; and the Le'-vites and the priests praised Je-ho'-vah day by day *singing* with loud instruments unto Je-ho'-vah.

22 And Hez-e-ki'-ah spake comfortably unto all the Le'-vites that had good understanding in *the service* of Je-ho'-vah. So they did eat throughout the feast for the seven days, offering sacrifices of peace-offerings, and making confession to Je-ho'-vah, the God of their fathers.

23 And the whole assembly took counsel to keep other seven days; and they kept *other* seven days with gladness.

24 For Hez-e-ki'-ah king of Ju'-dah did give to the assembly for

offerings a thousand bullocks and seven thousand sheep; and the princes gave to the assembly a thousand bullocks and ten thousand sheep; and a great number of priests sanctified themselves.

25 And all the assembly of Ju'-dah, with the priests and the Le'-vites, and all the assembly that came out of Is'-ra-el, and the sojourners that came out of the land of Is'-ra-el, and that dwelt in Ju'-dah, rejoiced.

26 So there was great joy in Je-ru'-sa-lem; for since the time of Sol'-o-mon the son of David king of Is'-ra-el there was not the like in Je-ru'-sa-lem.

27 Then the priests the Le'-vites arose and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy habitation, even unto heaven.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*Jehovah seeth not as man seeth.*” (1 Sam. 16: 7.)
DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Chron. 30: 16-22.

Daily Bible Readings

February 11. M.	Beginning of Hezekiah's Reign (2 Chron. 29: 1, 2)
February 12. T.	Early Activities of Hezekiah (2 Chron. 29: 3-11)
February 13. W.	Temple Cleansed (2 Chron. 29: 12-19)
February 14. T.	Sacrifices Offered (2 Chron. 29: 20-24)
February 15. F.	King Hezekiah Worships (2 Chron. 29: 25-30)
February 16. S.	The King Is Pleased (2 Chron. 29: 31-36)
February 17. S.	Preparation for the Passover (2 Chron. 30: 1-12)

TIME.—726 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Hezekiah, the princes, the priests, the Levites, and the people.

Introduction

We have already studied the reign of Hezekiah as a whole, and we come now to consider a particular event in his reign, that of the great pass-over feast which he led his people in observing. The reign of Hezekiah marked an important era in the history of the people of Israel. As was pointed out in the previous lesson on this king, the people had fallen into the very depths of idolatry and impurity of worship and life. This resulted in their being at the mercy of their enemies, and especially the Assyrians; for Jehovah would not bless them in their sins. They had, in fact, forgotten God's law, and the doors of his house had been closed. Altars to foreign gods had been built in every part of Jerusalem, and high places in every section of the country. The spirit of iniquity, in short, was rampant in the land; the voice of the

true religion was all but silent; and death and destruction appeared inevitable for the beloved city of Jerusalem.

But regardless of how hopeless the situation might appear, Jehovah can work wonders when the people give him a chance. After Ahaz had done about all he was able to do to destroy the pure worship of Jehovah, his son Hezekiah succeeded him on the throne; and it is not easy to find a greater contrast between two kings. In writing of Hezekiah, the author of Second Kings says, "He trusted in Jehovah, the God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among them that were before him. For he clave to Jehovah; he departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which Jehovah com-

manded Moses." (2 Kings 18: 5, 6.) The result was that Jehovah was with him, and everything he did was made to prosper. He no longer had any fear of the Assyrians, and promptly rebelled against them. He also smote the Philistines. This is the kind of man who can lead in a great reformation.

It should be kept in mind that when the kingdom was divided, following the death of Solomon, Jeroboam who was made king of the northern portion devised ways and means of keeping his people from going up to Jerusalem for the annual feasts. (See 1 Kings 12: 26ff.)

The Golden Text

"Jehovah seeth not as man seeth"

This language was spoken to Samuel by Jehovah himself when the former was seeking a son of Jesse to anoint as the successor to the apostate Saul. The entire verse in which the words of the golden text are found reads as follows: "But Jehovah said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have rejected him: for Jehovah seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart." (1 Sam. 16: 7.) This text is particularly appropriate as the expression of the gist of the lesson now under consideration; for if all the facts are considered, it will be seen that only Jehovah could, in the final analysis, approve some of the things which were done by Hezekiah and those who were associated with him. Both Jeroboam and Hezekiah authorized a divinely appointed feast to be kept on a day other than the one which the law of Moses authorized. (See 1 Kings 12: 32; 2 Chron. 30: 2, 3.) It is easy, of course, to see that the difference between the rejection of the one and the acceptance of the other was due to *motive*; and it is in this that God alone is able to judge.

In the case of Jeroboam, there was no excuse whatsoever for any change in the established order of worship: his sole aim was to keep God's people from doing that which Moses had commanded; but the situation was entirely different in the case of Hezekiah. The circumstances in which they were involved made it impossible for them to keep the passover

But when Hezekiah sought to turn the people back to Jehovah, he did not limit his efforts to Judah alone, but extended them to include Israel as well. (Read 2 Chron. 30: 1-9.) This is the spirit which should characterize a true reformation and restoration; for God is interested in the salvation of all his people, and not just a few. (See 1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9; Mark 16: 15.) This was the spirit which characterized the leaders of the current Restoration Movement when it was launched in the early part of the nineteenth century; and it should still be the spirit of their successors today.

at its strictly authorized time; and it should be observed that Hezekiah was not responsible for the circumstances. "For the king had taken counsel, and his princes, and all the assembly in Jerusalem, to keep the passover in the second month. For they could not keep it at that time, because the priests had not sanctified themselves in sufficient number, neither had the people gathered themselves together in Jerusalem." (2 Chron. 30: 2, 3; read also chapter 29.)

It should be kept in mind that in celebrating the passover in the second month, rather than at the authorized time in the first month (Lev. 23: 4, 5), no change was made in *what* they did; but only in the *time* of the observance. A practical application of this principle for our time may be seen in connection with the observance of the Lord's supper in some places. While Christians are not told that they must eat the supper at a specified *hour* of the day, they are taught that the first day of the week is the time when they should eat it (Acts 20: 7); and it is fair to assume that *all* the disciples who customarily meet at a given place should assemble themselves together at the time agreed upon for that purpose (cf. Heb. 10: 25). This last passage is not limited to the meetings of the first day of the week; but it certainly does include them.

But there are sometimes circumstances which make it practically impossible for some of the brethren to meet at the accustomed time for the observance of the Lord's supper; and

it is often the case that arrangements are made for them to eat it at a later (or earlier) time that day, usually in the evening. However, there are brethren who contend that the day ends at six o'clock in the evening (based on the Jewish method of counting time); and that the eating of the supper after that hour would, in effect, be on Monday. But there is nothing in the Bible which teaches that people today must observe the Jewish method of counting time. Looking at the term "evening" in John 20: 19, in the light of Luke 24: 29, 33, 36, it is fair to assume that

the meeting in question took place in the early part of the night (the day was far spent when they reached Emmaus, and it took time for them to return to Jerusalem), which, according to Jewish time, would not be the first day of the week. It appears that John was using Roman time in his record; and if so, it would still be the first day of the week until midnight. This is enough to show that Christians should recognize the method of reckoning time wherever they may chance to be. (Cf. the various "time belts" of our country and of the world.)

The Text Explained

Preparation for the Passover

(2 Chron. 30: 13-20)

And there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great assembly. As already indicated, Hezekiah's invitation to come to Jerusalem for the passover (also called the feast of unleavened bread, because only that kind of bread could be eaten during the seven days following the sacrifice of the passover, Lev. 23: 4-8) was extended to "all Israel and Judah;" but not all from the northern kingdom responded favorably. "So the posts passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, even unto Zebulun: but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them. Nevertheless certain men of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem. Also upon Judah came the hand of God to give them one heart, to do the commandment of the king and of the princes by the word of Jehovah." (2 Chron. 30: 10-12.) This should be an impressive lesson to those people, both in the church and out of it, who lightly regard the Lord's invitation to do his will, which is given through godly men and women who are seeking to please the Lord.

And they arose and took away the altars that were in Jerusalem, and all the altars for incense took they away, and cast them into the brook Kidron. These were the altars which Ahaz had erected in Jerusalem for his idolatrous worship. (See 2 Chron. 28: 24; 2 Kings 16: 10-16.) But Hezekiah, acting in the fear of Jehovah,

showed his contempt for the idolatrous altars by casting them into the brook Kidron, which had become the receptacle for the impurities and abominations of idol worship. (See 2 Chron. 15: 16; 29: 16.)

Then they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the second month: and the priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought burnt-offerings into the house of Jehovah. And they stood in their place after their order, according to the law of Moses the man of God: the priests sprinkled the blood which they received of the hand of the Levites. For there were many in the assembly that had not sanctified themselves: therefore the Levites had the charge of killing the passovers for every one that was not clean, to sanctify them unto Jehovah. For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it is written. For Hezekiah had prayed for them, saying, The good Jehovah pardon every one that setteth his heart to seek God, Jehovah, the God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. And Jehovah hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people.

Although Jehovah had specified that the passover be observed on the fourteenth day of the first month, as we have already seen, he himself had authorized an exception which made it possible for the feast to be observed on the fourteenth day of the second month. (See Num. 9: 9-13.) Hezekiah therefore was acting

within the bounds of scriptural authority, when he led the people in the belated observance of the feast. God never makes it impossible for any person to serve him, if he sincerely wants to; and we may be sure that no man will be rejected who has done the very best he was able to do. This is not to be construed to imply that God will look with favor upon people who think that they can please him while neglecting his commandments. This is the plain implication of Num. 9: 13. As already noted, there are some who, because of conditions beyond their control, are unable to assemble with the saints when the Lord's supper is eaten; and because of that, arrangements are made for a later observance on that day which, in the light of the principle we are now discussing, seems both reasonable and right. But it is exceedingly doubtful that the Lord will accept the worship of those who deliberately neglect the regular service, in order to do their own bidding. This should cause those who want some extra sleep, to visit, or to engage in pursuits of pleasure to examine more closely the word of the Lord. (Cf. James 2: 10; 4: 17.)

When Hezekiah came to the throne, he did not delay to begin his great reformation. His interest was in all people who were called by the Lord's name, or who had the right to be thus called, if they were willing to do his will; and when many came to Jerusalem from idol altars, they not only were not clean in God's sight, but they did not have the time to become ceremonially clean, so that they might eat the passover. Some people might have reasoned that since those conditions prevailed, they would have to wait for another year; but that was neither the will of the Lord nor the king's desire. They were simply called on to do the best they could under the circumstances. "For Hezekiah had prayed for them, saying, The good Jehovah pardon every one that setteth his heart to seek God, Jehovah, the God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. And Jehovah hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people."

The Passover Observed

(2 Chron. 30: 21, 22)

And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness; and the Levites and the priests praised Jehovah day by day, singing with loud instruments unto Jehovah. The twelfth chapter of Exodus should be read for information regarding the origin, nature, and purpose of the passover. The passover was perhaps the greatest of the national festivals of the Jews, and the one which would come the nearest to uniting the people in their devotion to the Lord. There is no indication that Hezekiah was making an effort to reunite the two kingdoms; on the contrary, it appears that his sole purpose was to bring the people back to God.

There is an important lesson for us to learn in this connection. The Lord's supper is the feast around which the Lord's day worship is authorized (Acts 20: 7; 1 Cor. 11: 23ff.), and it should be the aim of every faithful Christian to do all he can to get the Lord's people everywhere to meet these appointments. It does not make too much difference where the various congregations meet, if they are faithful to the Lord they will be united in spirit. There was only one place where the passover could be scripturally observed, namely, Jerusalem; and it was for that reason that Hezekiah called on the Jews everywhere to meet in that city. The feast was characterized with great rejoicing on the part of the Jews, and that was as it should have been. Christian people can learn an important lesson from them in this respect. Hezekiah followed the lead of David in the use of mechanical instrumental music (2 Chron. 29: 25); but that has nothing to do with Christian worship. That type of music is nowhere mentioned in the New Testament as a part of the worship of a single church; and no one can prove a thing to be scriptural by the New Testament which it does not even remotely refer to or mention it in any way whatsoever.

And Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites that had good understanding in the service of Jehovah. So they did eat throughout the feast for seven days, offering

sacrifices of peace-offerings, and making confession to Jehovah, the God of their fathers. The Levites, along with the priests, had great fatigue and suffered many privations during the great festivals of the Jews, and it was particularly true of the Levites on the occasion now under consideration (2 Chron. 29: 34). Hezekiah understood this, and it was for that reason that he encouraged the Levites. Many church leaders today could profit by following the good king's example; for it often happens that preachers and others who are active in the Lord's work continue their service almost to the point of exhaustion, and a word of encouragement from the overseers would give renewed strength.

The Time of Feasting: Extended (2 Chron. 30: 23-27)

And the whole assembly took counsel to keep other seven days; and they kept other seven days with gladness. For Hezekiah king of Judah did give to the assembly for offerings a thousand bullocks and seven thousand sheep; and the princes gave to the assembly a thousand bullocks and ten thousand sheep; and a great number of priests sanctified themselves. And all the assembly of Judah, with the priests and the Levites, and all the assembly that came out of Israel, and the sojourners that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt in Judah, rejoiced. So there was great joy in Jerusalem; for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem. Then the priests and the Levites arose and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy habitation, even unto heaven.

This section of our lesson shows just how successful Hezekiah's efforts were. He not only called upon the people to return to God, but he, along with the princes, contributed even more than was expected of them, so that the worship and fellowship could continue beyond the prescribed limits of the sacred feast. Many priest also caught the spirit

and cleansed themselves, so that they, too, could participate in the activities of the occasion. This, in the language of our day, was a real revival. The reason why nothing like this was seen in Jerusalem since the time of Solomon was that following his death the kingdom was divided, and Jeroboam had encouraged the people of the northern kingdom not to go to the holy city. The other kings who followed him had done the same thing. And of all the kings of Judah up to this time, Hezekiah was the only one who initiated a religious reformation based on the law of Moses; and his efforts came just a very few years (some six or seven) before the end of the kingdom of Israel.

This is enough to show that every child of God should not relax in an effort to bring people to God; for it may be later than we think. It would be natural to assume that Israel was well on the way to regaining so much of that which they had lost; but alas, how soon were all those prospects gone for ever! The kingdom of Israel was soon to fall, and Hezekiah was to be succeeded by his son Manasseh who nullified everything which his godly father had done, or so it seems. (Read 2 Chron. 33: 1-13.) But even this wicked king was brought to his senses, and Jehovah was entreated of him.

In speaking of why so many religious people are lost, Adam Clarke says, "It is not for the want of holy resolutions and heavenly influences that men are not saved, but through their own unsteadiness; they do not persevere, they forget the necessity of continuing in prayer, and thus the Holy Spirit is grieved, departs from them, and leaves them to their own darkness and hardness of heart. When we consider the heavenly influences which many receive who draw back to perdition, and the good fruits which for a time they bore, it is blasphemy to say they had no genuine or saving grace; they had it, they showed it, they trifled with it, sinned against it, continued in their rebellions, and therefore are lost."

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What was the prevailing condition in Israel and Judah at the time of this lesson?

Why does a situation like this present a challenge to the Lord's people? Tell something of the character and attitude of Hezekiah. Why did Hezekiah propose such a great reformation? Why did he include the northern kingdom in his efforts? What lesson is there in this for us?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of this part of our lesson spoken? Why is this passage an appropriate text for this lesson? What place does "motive" have in one's service to and acceptance with God? Why was it necessary for Hezekiah to make a change in the time for observing the passover? In what way is the principle involved in this applicable to our day?

Preparation for the Passover

Why was the first great annual feast of the Jews called both the passover and the feast of unleavened bread? What kind of response did Hezekiah receive to his invitation to attend the passover feast? Why do so many people in all ages lightly regard the Lord's invitation to serve him? What was done in Jerusalem before the passover was celebrated and why? Show that Hezekiah did not contravene the law of Moses in authorizing the

passover to be held in the second month instead of the first. What important lesson is there in this circumstance for us? What prayer did Hezekiah offer for the people? Why did Jehovah look with favor upon and bless them in this?

The Passover Observed

Discuss the origin, nature, and purpose of the passover. What important lesson is there in this for us? Why is it so important that all of God's people be united in spirit? How do we know that mechanical instrumental music has no place in Christian worship? Why did Hezekiah speak comfortably to all the Levites? Show in what way the principle is applicable in our day.

The Time of Feasting Extended

Discuss the measure of success which attended Hezekiah's efforts to celebrate the passover in the first year of his reign. Why was the gathering the greatest since the days of Solomon? Show that this was the final effort made to bring the northern kingdom back to God, so far as the record is concerned. What lesson is there in this for us? Why are so many religious people lost?

Lesson VIII—February 24, 1963

JOSIAH'S GREAT REFORMATION

Lesson Text

2 Chron. 34: 14-21, 29-33

14 And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of Je-ho'-vah, Hil-ki'-ah the priest found the book of the law of Je-ho'-vah given by Mo'-ses.

15 And Hil-ki'-ah answered and said to Sha'-phan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of Je-ho'-vah. And Hil-ki'-ah delivered the book to Sha'-phan.

16 And Sha'-phan carried the book to the king, and moreover brought back word to the king, saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they are doing.

17 And they have emptied out the money that was found in the house of Je-ho'-vah, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and into the hand of the workmen.

18 And Sha'-phan the scribe told the king, saying, Hil-ki'-ah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Sha'-phan read therein before the king.

19 And it came to pass, when the

king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes.

20 And the king commanded Hil-ki'-ah, and A-hi'-kam the son of Sha'-phan, and Ab'-don the son of Mi'-cah, and Sha'-phan the scribe, and A-sa'-iah the king's servant, saying,

21 Go ye, inquire of Je-ho'-vah for me, and for them that are left in Is'-ra-el and in Ju'-dah, concerning the words of the book that is found; for great is the wrath of Je-ho'-vah that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of Je-ho'-vah, to do according unto all that is written in this book.

29 Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Ju'-dash and Je-ru'-sa-lem.

30 And the king went up to the house of Je-ho'-vah, and all the men of Ju'-dah and the inhabitants of Je-

ru'-sa-lem, and the priests, and the Le'-vites, and all the people, both great and small: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of Je-ho'-vah.

31 And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before Je-ho'-vah, to walk after Je-ho'-vah, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*“Thy word have I laid up in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.”* (Psalm 119: 11.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Chron. 34: 22-28.

Daily Bible Readings

February 18.	M.....	Idolatry Overthrown (2 Chron. 31: 1, 2)
February 19.	T.....	Laws Concerning Offerings (2 Chron. 31: 3-10)
February 20.	W.....	Hezekiah's Righteous Reign (2 Chron. 32: 27-32)
February 21.	T.....	Manasseh's Wicked Reign (2 Chron. 33: 1-9)
February 22.	F.....	Manasseh and People Ignore Warnings (2 Chron. 33: 10-13)
February 23.	S.....	Activities of Manasseh (2 Chron. 33: 14-20)
February 24.	S.....	Josiah's Reign (2 Chron. 34: 1-13)

TIME.—622 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Josiah, Hilkiah, Shaphan, and Others.

Introduction

It is always sad to watch the decline and fall of a nation; but such is the inevitable result of sinful living. This was especially true of both Israel and Judah. The end of Israel came during the reign of Hezekiah, and Judah went into captivity a little over twenty years after the death of Josiah, the last good ruler of the southern kingdom. It seems incredible that a nation with the history of Judah, and with the voice of God speaking to them almost continuously, could go into complete apostasy; but such was the case. The drift started with Solomon, and in spite of brief periods of respite during the reigns of Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah, the trend was nearly always toward inevitable ruin. Practically all the good which was accomplished by Hezekiah was nullified by his wicked son and successor, Manasseh; so much so that even the book of the law was lost in the house of Jehovah! Such were the conditions when Josiah came to the throne; and as we shall see further on in this lesson, his reformation was the last desperate struggle against

32 And he caused all that were found in Je-ru'-sa-lem and Ben'-jamin to stand to it. And the inhabitants of Je-ru'-sa-lem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers.

33 And Jo-si'-ah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Is'-ra-el, and made all that were found in Is'-ra-el to serve, even to serve Je-ho'-vah their God. All his days they departed not from following Je-ho'-vah, the God of their fathers.

idolatry, and the last serious and arduous effort to beat back the ever-increasing floods of corruption.

Josiah was the fifteenth descendant of David to rule over the kingdom of Judah, and he was only eight years old when he came to the throne, due to the murder of his father Amon, the son and successor of Manasseh. Josiah reigned for thirty-one years, his time on the throne being cut short by his untimely death at the hands of Pharaoh-neco, who was on his way to assist the king of Assyria in his struggle against the allied forces of Media and Babylon. Josiah didn't like the idea of the Egyptian forces crossing the great plain of Esdraelon, and he, accordingly, went out to intercept him in the valley of Megiddo, where he was slain. It was during the reign of Josiah that the prophets Nahum, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah were active. Jeremiah was one of those who lamented for Josiah (2 Chron. 35: 25; cf. Jer. 22: 10; Lam. 4: 20). Josiah was in reality the last independent ruler of Judah, since the four who followed him were mere

puppets of Egypt and Babylon, as may be seen by the successive conquests and deportations.

In his *History of the Bible*, William Smith says of Josiah, "Though he fell in battle before he had completed his fortieth year, he left the brightest name for piety and religious zeal among all the successors of David. He shares with Hezekiah the praise of walking perfectly in the way of his father David. His reign marks the last dying glory of the earthly kingdom of David. It may, indeed, seem mysterious that a doom, so often postponed by the repentance and faith of earlier kings, should have followed so close upon the reign of the best and most zealous of them all, and that he himself

should have fallen by a premature and violent death. But we must look beyond the personal character of the king to the state of the people and their rulers. We have seen that the great reform of Hezekiah was probably superficial; the apostasy under Manasseh and Amon was the last and lowest stage in the long course of national degeneracy; and the deep corruption that prevailed during the minority of Josiah is drawn in the blackest colors by the prophets Zephaniah and Jeremiah. The very violence of Josiah's reformation indicates the absence of true and spontaneous sympathy among the people. In short, they were past purifying except by the fiercest fires of affliction."

The Golden Text

"Thy word have I laid up in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." Any kind of living which pleases the Lord must be directed by his word. Jeremiah says, "O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." (Jer. 10: 23.) The wise man tells us that "a man's goings are of Jehovah; how then can a man understand his way?" (Prov. 20: 24.) Jehovah, speaking through Isaiah, says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa. 55: 8, 9.) This is enough to show that we must have God's word if our lives are to be acceptable to him.

The words of the golden text for today's lesson are taken from the second section of the One Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm, which shows the importance of and the attitude toward the word of God in cleansing one's way. (Read Psalm 119: 9-16.) When the word of God is given a place in one's heart, the result will be an upright life. This is seen in the context of the words now under consideration. Many a person has been kept from wrongdoing because the word of God which was in his heart influenced him in the right direction. The story is told of a young man who entered a building through a window at two o'clock one morn-

ing, with the intention of burglarizing the house. As he looked into the room of an aged man who was to be his victim, he saw this motto on the wall: "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy paths." (Prov. 3: 6.) It was as the voice of his dead mother speaking to him from her grave; for she had taught him these words when he was just a small boy at her knees. It was impossible for him to complete his mission; and he resolved that night that he would never attempt to rob any other person as long as he lived.

It was the word of God which influenced Josiah in his great reformation. "And he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, and walked in the ways of David his father, and turned not to the right hand or to the left. For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the Asherim, and the graven images, and the molten images." (2 Chron. 34: 2, 3.) It was his reverence for God's word then which moved him to destroy the idolatrous worship in his kingdom, and to repair the house of Jehovah; and it was that same attitude which inspired within him such fear when Shaphan read to him from the book which Hilkiah had found in the temple. (Cf. 2 Kings 23: 25.)

The Text Explained

The Book of the Law Found in the House of Jehovah (2 Chron. 34: 14-18)

And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of Jehovah, Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law of Jehovah given by Moses. And Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of Jehovah. And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan. And Shaphan carried the book to the king, and moreover brought back word to the king, saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they are doing. And they have emptied out the money that was found in the house of Jehovah, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and into the hand of the workmen. And Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read therein before the king.

The money referred to here was a collection "which the Levites, the keepers of the threshold, had gathered of the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel, and of all Judah and Benjamin, and of the inhabitants of Jerusalem." (2 Chron. 34: 9.) This money was to be used "to buy hewn stone, and timber for couplings, and to make beams for the houses which the kings of Judah had destroyed." (Verse 11.) The parallel account in Second Kings adds this statement, regarding the workmen, "Howbeit there was no reckoning made with them of the money that was delivered into their hand; for they dealt faithfully." (2 Kings 22: 7.) This is the spirit which will characterize all Christians who serve in a similar situation, if they are loyal to the teaching of the New Testament. (See Eph. 6: 5-8; Col. 3: 22-25.)

It was while the workmen were repairing the breaches in the house of Jehovah that the book of the law was found by the priest—among the rubbish which had accumulated in the temple during the period of its neglect, which was during the reigns of Manasseh and Amon. It is hard for us to realize the full force of this discovery; for we can scarcely conceive of conditions reaching the point where the law of God would be lost in his own house! But when we

read of the idolatrous reign of Manasseh, we can begin to see how it was possible for God's law to be lost. He even built altars in the house of Jehovah, and set the graven image of the idol, which he had made, in the house of God; and seduced Judah and the inhabitant of Jerusalem, "so that they did evil more than did the nations whom Jehovah destroyed before the children of Israel." (Read 2 Chron. 33: 1-9.)

But that was not the only way for God's law to be lost; it is often lost today by the very people who profess to believe and obey it! It is buried beneath the rubbish of creeds and practices which are both foreign and contradictory to that which the pure word of God contains. The Bible was almost completely lost during the dark ages while the church of Rome dominated practically all religious activities; and so opposed were the leaders of that church to allowing the people to read the Scriptures that one after another of those who sought to make the Bible available to all were burned at the stake. The reason for the great success of the sixteenth century Reformation, and the subsequent Restoration, was the fact that the Bible had been given back to the people, and they could read for themselves. (Read Rev. 10: 1-11.)

After Hilkiah had found the book of the law of Jehovah, he gave it to Shaphan the scribe; and he in turn took it to the king, and read to him from it. Even the law of God itself is of no practical value to those for whom it is intended, unless they see and understand that which it contains. One of the things which the people who returned to Jerusalem from Babylon did was to listen to Ezra read God's law unto them; and the fact that they heard and understood the word of God accounts for the reformations which took place during that period. (See the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah.) When the Bible is made known to right thinking people a great change will be made in their lives.

The King's Reaction to the Inspired Message

(2 Chron. 34: 19-21)

And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the

law, that he rent his clothes. And the king commanded Hilkiah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king's servant, saying, Go ye, inquire of Jehovah for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found; for great is the wrath of Jehovah that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of Jehovah, to do according unto all that is written in this book.

The words found in the book of the law of Jehovah had a profound effect upon the king Josiah; and he refused to rest until he could learn from the Lord "concerning the words of the book that is found." The men who were appointed to make the inquiry went to the prophetess Huldah, who spoke to them these words: "Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel: Tell ye the man that sent you unto me, Thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah. Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore is my wrath poured out upon this place, and it shall not be quenched. But unto the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of Jehovah, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel: as touching the words which thou hast heard, because thy heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou hearest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbled thyself before me, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith Jehovah. Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof. And they brought back word to the king." (2 Chron. 34: 23-28.)

The words just quoted have been brought before us for two purposes, namely, (1) because of the truth they contain, and (2) in order to show that despite the apparent success of

the king's reformation, it was after all only superficial. If it had been genuine, so far as the people were concerned, God would have spared them; but as it was, Jehovah's message to the king was, "Therefore is my wrath poured out upon this place, and it shall not be quenched." There can be no question about the zeal, fidelity, and acceptance of Jehovah on the part of Josiah; but the people were beyond redemption. He was a noble ruler; and if he could have infused his own spirit into his subjects, all would have been well. It was simply too late. He struggled nobly to perform an impossible task. The very best that his royal presence and royal mandate could do was to compel an external show of submission to God's will. The hearts of the people were not in the reformation, because they were joined to their idols. (Cf. the Books of Jeremiah and Zephaniah.)

The Message Read to the People
and a Covenant to Serve Jehovah
Made

(2 Chron. 34: 29-33)

Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. And the king went up to the house of Jehovah, and all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, both great and small: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of Jehovah. And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before Jehovah, to walk after Jehovah, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book. And he caused all that were found in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were found in Israel to serve, even to serve Jehovah their God. All his days they departed not from following Jehovah, the God of their fathers.

Josiah both understood and believed the words which were found in the book of the law which had been placed in his hands; and he proposed to do something about it. He first called the people together, and went up to the house of Jehovah. He next read to them all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of Jehovah. He then stood before them, and made a covenant to obey Jehovah in all respects, "with all *his* heart, and with all *his* soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book." This was the king's part; and it appears that he was faithful to his pledge.

How often is the principle of this occasion repeated today! Faithful elders and preachers pledging themselves to follow after the Lord with all their might, thereby, not only doing that which is right in the sight of the Lord, but also setting an example before all who may be before them. This reminds us of Paul's address to the Ephesian elders. (Read Acts 20: 17-35.) But there is no indication that the people who heard Josiah read from God's law and make his pledge responded with a like spirit. Instead, the king "*caused* all that were found in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it;" and "made all that were found in Israel to serve, even to serve Jehovah their God." It is true that the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, and that all who were found in Israel, that is, those who were left by the Assyrians, departed not from following Jehovah, as long as Josiah lived; but there is no indication that they would have done so, had it not been for the royal decree.

The covenant to serve Jehovah was followed by the celebration of the passover, about which the sacred historian says, "And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did any of the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem." (2 Chron. 35: 18.) This apparently does not mean that the greatest number of people ever to attend a passover were there; for it was limited to two tribes, and the

few who remained in Israel. And, too, there does not seem to be anything in the record to indicate that it exceeded the rejoicing which characterized the passover in Hezekiah's time. The probable reason for saying that Josiah's passover exceeded all the others from the days of Samuel was in the strict manner of its observance, and the exceeding liberality of the king himself in providing the sacrifices to be offered. Josiah was doing his best to follow God's will as it was revealed in his law; and if his subjects had been as interested in doing right as he was, the nation would have been saved from destruction. But twenty-two and one half years later, the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem, including the temple, and led the people into captivity. (Cf. Jer. 18: 1-12.)

In commenting on the condition of the people of Judah at that time, Errett asks, "Have you ever seen a tree standing out alone in a clearing, naked and dead, blasted by the lightning, or fatally 'girdled'—such a tree bathed in God's sunshine, watered with dews and rains, saluted by myriads of Nature's living voices, and invited by heaven and earth to live and flourish, yet drinking in the sunlight in vain, and making no response to the light of heaven, or the music of the earth, or the throbbing heart of Nature? Such a tree was the Jewish nation at this time—dead to the roots; not even the voice of God's holy law, nor the voice of the living prophets, had for it any quickening power."

After stating that there was no king before him, that turned to Jehovah with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him, the writer of Second Kings says, "Notwithstanding, Jehovah turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations wherewith Manasseh had provoked him. And Jehovah said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and I will cast off this city which I have chosen, even Jerusalem, and the house which I said, My name shall be there." (2 Kings 23: 26, 27.)

It is interesting to note that Josiah

was the king who fulfilled the prediction which the prophet from Judah made when he cried against the altar of Jeroboam in Bethel. (See 1 Kings

13: 1, 2; 2 Kings 23: 15-20.) It was about three hundred and fifty years from the time of the prediction till its fulfillment.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today?
Repeat the golden text.
Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What was happening to the kingdom of Judah at the time of this lesson?
What were the conditions which made the end of the kingdom inevitable?
Under what circumstances did Josiah come to the throne?
How long did he reign and how did he meet his death?
Who were some of the prophets who flourished during his reign?

The Golden Text

Why is it so important for one to keep the word of God in his heart?
Discuss the context in which the words of the golden text are found.
Cite some examples of the practical working of the golden text.
What was the great motivating factor behind Josiah's reformation? Give reasons for your answer.

The Book of the Law Found in the House of Jehovah

Why was a collection of money being taken at the time of this lesson?
What great tribute was paid to the workers in the house of Jehovah?
What application does this principle have in our day?
Under what circumstances was the book of the law found in the house of Jehovah?
How did it come to be lost there?
In what ways may the word of God be lost in our day?
Discuss this principle in connection with the Reformation and the Restoration.
What was done with the book of the law when it was found in the temple?

When only does the law of God have a practical value?
What, then, does God expect people to do with his word?
Cite some examples of this practice in Bible times.

The King's Reaction to the Inspired Message

What was the reaction of Josiah to the reading of the newly found book of the law?
What did he direct Hilkiah and others to do?
To whom did they go and what was the message they received?
What important bearing do the words of Huldah have on our lesson for today?
For what did the king deserve commendation?

The Message Read to the People and a Covenant to Serve Jehovah Made

What did Josiah do after hearing the message which the prophetess sent him?
Why did he read the law of God to the people?
What did the king himself resolve to do?
What application does his example have in our day?
What indication do we have that the people themselves did not enter wholeheartedly into the covenant which the king made?
What followed immediately after the assembly at the temple?
In what way was the passover one of the greatest?
Why wasn't Josiah's reformation sufficient to save the nation from destruction?
What important prediction was fulfilled by this king?

Lesson IX—March 3, 1963

THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY

Lesson Text

Jer. 39: 1-10

1 And it came to pass when Je-ru'-sa-lem was taken 1 (in the ninth year of Zed-e-ki'-ah king of Ju'-dah in the tenth month, came Neb-u-chad-rez'-zar king of Bab'-y-lon and all his army against Je-ru'-sa-lem, and besieged it;

2 In the eleventh year of Zed-e-ki'-ah, in the fourth month, the ninth day of the month, a breach was made in the city),

3 That all the princes of the king of Bab'-y-lon came in, and sat in the

middle gate, to wit, Ner'-gal-sha-re-zer, Sam'-gar-ne'-bo, Sar-se'-chim, Rab'-sa-ris, Ner'-gal-sha-re'-zer, Rab'-mag, with all the rest of the princes of the king of Bab'-y-lon.

4 And it came to pass that, when Zed-e-ki'-ah the king of Ju'-dah and all the men of war saw them, then they fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the king's garden, through the gate betwixt the two walls; and he went out toward the Ar'-a-bah.

5 But the army of the Chal-de-ans pursued after them, and overtook Zed-e-ki-ah in the plains of Jer'-i-oh: and when they had taken him, they brought him up to Neb-u-chad-rez'-zar king of Bab'-y-lon to Rib'-lah in the land of Ha'-math; and he gave judgment upon him.

6 Then the king of Bab'-y-lon slew the sons of Zed-e-ki-ah in Rib'-lah before his eyes: also the king of Bab'-y-lon slew all the nobles of Ju'-dah.

7 Moreover he put out Zed-e-ki-ah's eyes, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Bab'-y-lon.

8 And the Chal-de-ans burned the king's house, and the houses of the people, with fire, and brake down the walls of Je-ru'-sa-lem.

9 Then Neb'-u-zar-a'-dan the captain of the guard carried away captive into Bab'-y-lon the residue of the people that remained in the city, the deserters also that fell away to him, and the residue of the people that remained.

10 But Neb'-u-zar-a'-dan the captain of the guard left of the poor of the people, that had nothing, in the land of Ju'-dah, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Ye *have sinned against Jehovah.*” (Num. 32: 23.)
 DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Kings 25: 1-20.

Daily Bible Readings

February 25. M.	Discovery of the Book of the Law (2 Kings 22: 8-13)
February 26. T.	Repentance too Late (2 Kings 23: 21-27)
February 27. W.	Babylonian Crisis (Jer. 26: 8-16)
February 28. T.	Influence of the Book of the Law (2 Kings 23: 1-14)
March 1. F.	Final Rebellion (2 Chron. 36: 11-16)
March 2. S.	Disaster Falls (2 Chron. 36: 17-21)
March 3. S.	Grief of the Captives (Psalm 80: 1-7)

TIME.—587 B.C.

PLACES.—Jerusalem, Judah, and Babylon.

PERSONS.—Nebuchadrezzar, Zedekiah, the nobles, and the people.

Introduction

In preceding lessons we have observed something of the strength and ruthlessness of the Assyrian kings; but when we reach this point in the history of Judah, that mighty empire had just about run its course. The allied forces of Media and Babylon overthrew the Assyrians about the time Josiah had completed his reforms; and it was, as we saw in our last lesson, when Pharaoh-necho was hastening to the aid of the Assyrians at Carchemish, where he was decisively defeated by Nebuchadrezzar, that Josiah was killed by the Egyptian monarch. That ended, so far as all practical purposes were concerned, the great reformation which Josiah had made possible. This was true for the simple reason that the people did not respond to his righteous leadership.

After Josiah was slain at Megiddo by Pharaoh-necho, the late king's "servants carried him in a chariot dead from Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own sepulchre. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah,

and anointed him, and made him king in his father's stead." (2 Kings 23: 30.) This was the last time the people of Judah had the opportunity of crowning their own king. Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he ascended the throne. "And he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, according to all that his fathers had done. And Pharaoh-necho put him in bonds at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and put the land to a tribute of a hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold. And Pharaoh-necho made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the room of Josiah his father, and changed his name to Jehoikim: but he took Jehoahaz away; and he came to Egypt, and died there. And Jehoikim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh; but he taxed the land to give the money according to the command of Pharaoh: he exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land, of every one according to his taxation, to give it unto Pharaoh-necho." (2 Kings 23: 31-35.)

The quotation just given shows that the king of Judah was under the complete domination of the king of Egypt. Jehoiakim was allowed to reign eleven years, but the last three years were under the control of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon. Following his rebellion against the king of Babylon, Jehovah sent against Jehoiakim several bands of hostile people to destroy Judah, according to the word which he had spoken through the prophets. "Surely at the commandment of Jehovah came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did, and also for the innocent blood that he shed;

for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; and Jehovah would not pardon." Following the death of Jehoiakim, his son Jehoiachin, also known as Jeconiah and Coniah, became king, but Nubuchadnezzar carried him to Babylon after a short reign of three months. "And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's father's brother, king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah." (Read 2 Kings 24: 1-20.) This was the last king of Judah, and his terrible end is recorded in 2 Kings 25. The last four kings of Judah were uniformly wicked, in addition to being only vassals to the kings of Egypt and Babylon, respectively.

The Golden Text

"Ye have sinned against Jehovah These words were spoken by Moses to the children of Gad and the children of Reuben who, along with one half of the tribe of Manasseh, were given inheritances on the east side of the Jordan. Their request for land on the east side of the river was granted on condition that their men of war would cross the Jordan and help the other tribes get settled, before they returned to their homes. "And Moses said unto them, If ye will do this thing, if ye will arm yourselves to go before Jehovah to the war, and every armed man of you will pass over the Jordan before Jehovah, until he hath driven out his enemies from before him, and the land is subdued before Jehovah; then afterward ye shall return, and be guiltless towards Jehovah, and towards Israel; and this land shall be unto you for a possession before Jehovah. But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against Jehovah; and be sure your sin will find you out." (Read Num. 32.)

The practical meaning of sin is "to miss the mark." God has always placed a goal which pleases him before his people, and has commanded them to strive toward it; but if and when they did otherwise, the result was sin. This was true of the kingdom, both of Israel and Judah. They had God's law before them, and when they made a sincere effort to keep it he blest them; but when they departed from God's way and endeavored to follow the ways of the gods of the land, they suffered for

it. Even after the decree of destruction has been spoken against the nation, Jehovah commanded Jeremiah to make another effort to get the people to repent. "And it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, that the word came unto Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying, Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I propose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin." (Jer. 36: 1-3.)

This should be enough to cause every child of God to repent in shame for everything which he has done contrary to his will. God does not want any person to be lost, and is willing to make it possible for any one who desires it to have a second chance, as long as time continues. It is only when people refuse God's mercy that he gives them up to the evil one. "And even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting." (Rom. 1: 28; Cf. 2 Thess. 2: 8-12.) Ezekiel was among the captives who were taken to Babylon, along with Jehoiachin (see 2 Kings 24: 10-16; Ezek. 1: 1-3), and this is the way God spoke to the captives through him, "And thou, son of man, say unto the house of Israel: Thus

ye speak, saying, Our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we pine away in them; how then can we live? Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that

the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. 33: 10, 11.) This is still the message of God to us. (Cf. 1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9.)

The Text Explained

The Capture of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans

(Jer. 39: 1-3)

And it came to pass when Jerusalem was taken (in the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon and all his army against Jerusalem, and besieged it; in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, the ninth day of the month, a breach was made in the city), that all the princes of the king of Babylon came in, and sat in the middle gate, to wit, Nergalsharezer, Samgar-nebo, Sarsechim, Rab-saris, Nergal-sharezer, Rab-mag, with all the rest of the princes of the king of Babylon.

The occasion for this invasion by the Chaldeans was the rebellion of Zedekiah; and it appears that Nebuchadrezzar (note the different spelling in Jeremiah) determined to put an end to his reign. The siege against Jerusalem continued for eighteen months, except for a brief interruption during which time the Chaldeans left to engage the Egyptians who were on their way to give aid to the besieged monarch of Judah. The Egyptians were defeated and returned to their own land, and the Chaldeans returned to Jerusalem and continued their siege. It was while the Chaldeans had temporarily lifted their siege that Jeremiah warned the king not to be deceived into thinking that the city would not fall; and he also urged the king to surrender peaceably unto the invaders and go into captivity. (Jer., chapters 34-37.)

Some of the principal men of Jerusalem "heard the words that Jeremiah spake unto all the people, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, He that abideth in the city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence; but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey, and he shall live. Thus saith Jehovah, This city shall surely be given into

the hand of the army of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it. Then the princes said unto the king, Let this man, we pray thee, be put to death; forasmuch as he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt. And Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he is in your hand; for the king is not he that can do anything against you." (Jer. 38: 1-5.)

The princes then had Jeremiah put into a dungeon where he sank into the mire, but he was rescued by one of the eunuchs. The king then sought a private interview with the prophet, when the exhortation to go peaceably with the Chaldeans was repeated, but the weak king again declined to follow his advice. Something of the terrible condition within Jerusalem during the siege may be learned from the twenty-fifth chapter of Second Kings. (Cf. 2 Kings 6: 24-7: 20.) Thus, in consequence of this close and protracted blockade, the people were reduced to dreadful extremities; and under the maddening influence of hunger, the most inhuman atrocities were perpetrated. (Cf. Lam. 2: 20-22; 4: 9-18; Ezek. 5: 10.) All of this was in fulfillment of the prophetic denunciations which warned the people of their fate, should they apostatize. (Cf. Lev. 26: 29; Duet. 28: 53-57; Jer. 15: 2; 27: 12, 13; Ezek. 4: 16.)

Jehovah had promised that the sceptre would not depart from Judah until Shiloh, that is, the Messiah, should come; and since the Israelites had demonstrated that they were no longer capable of maintaining a nation which was loyal to Jehovah, the captivity had become a practical necessity in order to preserve the line of David from utter extinction, and the people of Judah from irredeemable apostasy. They were therefore removed from their homeland into a foreign country; and although the action was drastic, the results were

gratifying; for under the chastening rod of Babylon they renounced their idolatry, reestablished their monotheistic faith, and were never again guilty of placing their trust in the gods of this world.

The Attempt of Zedekiah and the Men of War to Escape

(Jer. 39: 4, 5)

And it came to pass that, when Zedekiah the king of Judah and all the men of war saw them, then they fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the king's garden, through the gate betwixt the two walls; and he went out toward the Arabah. But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after them, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho: and when they had taken him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath; and he gave judgment upon him.

This was Zedekiah's reply to the pleadings of Jehovah through Jeremiah to surrender to the invaders. "Then said Jeremiah unto Zedekiah, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of hosts, the God of Israel: If thou wilt go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burned with fire; and thou shalt live, and thy house. But if thou wilt not go forth to the king of Babylon's princes, then shall this city be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand. And Zedekiah the king said unto Jeremiah, I am afraid of the Jews that are fallen away to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand, and they mock me. But Jeremiah said, They shall not deliver thee. Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of Jehovah, in that which I speak unto thee: so it shall be well with thee, and thy soul shall live." (Jer. 38: 17-20. Read also verses 21-28.)

In commenting on Zedekiah's efforts to escape from the Chaldeans, Matthew Henry observes, "But those as much deceive themselves, who think to escape God's judgments, as those who think to brave them; the feet of him who flees from them will as surely fail as the hands of him that fights against them; when God judges, he will overcome." If Zede-

kiah had listened to Jeremiah, he would have had the help of Jehovah, even though he was in the hands of his enemies; but as it was, he had neither the help of Jehovah nor the sympathy of the king of Babylon. Furthermore, Zedekiah's refusal to heed the counsel of Jeremiah not only brought affliction to himself, but destruction to the city, which the king of Babylon had twice spared. God's discipline for his people is not primarily for their destruction, but for their good, if they are willing to submit to it; but it will result in their destruction, if they continue to rebel against it. (Cf. Heb. 12: 1-13; 1 Cor. 10: 13; Heb. 2: 14-16.)

It should be noted that when Zedekiah sought to escape from the army of Nebuchadnezzar, that the men of war, that is, Judah's men of war, fled with him. Their flight was "toward the Arabah," that is, the plain or valley of the Jordan. When it was evident that they would be captured, the men of war deserted Zedekiah. "But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him." (2 Kings 25: 5.) When Zedekiah was captured, he was taken to Riblah in the land of Hamath, a city in what we know as Syria, on the road between Palestine and Babylonia, where the Chaldean kings were accustomed to remain while conducting the operations of their armies in Phoenicia and Palestine, where Nebuchadnezzar "gave judgment upon him." He rejected Jehovah's mercy, and now Jehovah had turned him over to his own master.

The Punishment of the King and the Destruction of the City

(Jer. 39: 6-10)

Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes: also the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of Judah. It should be remembered that Zedekiah was made king by the king of Babylon, but had later rebelled against him. (See 2 Kings 24: 17, 20.) In speaking of Zedekiah's being brought to Riblah, Josephus says, "When he was come, Nebuchadnezzar began to call him a wicked wretch, and a covenant-breaker, and one that had forgotten his former words, when he

promised to keep the country for him. He also reproached him for his ingratitude, that when he had received the kingdom from him, who had taken it from Jehoiachin, and given it to him, he had made use of the power he gave him against him that gave it; 'but,' said he, 'God is great, who hated that conduct of thine, and hath brought thee under us.'" There is no question about the Lord's attitude toward deception and ingratitude. (Cf. Ezek. 21: 25; Luke 17: 17, 18.)

Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel had foretold the fate of Zedekiah, but some unfriendly critics of the Bible have endeavored to show that there is a discrepancy between the two prophets. For example, Jeremiah said, "And Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes; and he shall bring Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be until I visit him, saith Jehovah." (See Jer. 32: 4, 5; cf. 34: 4, 5.) Ezekiel's words are, "And the prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the dark, and shall go forth: they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his face, because he shall not see the land with his eyes. My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare; and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there." (Ezek. 12: 12, 13.) There is, of course, no difficulty in understanding the two passages, when they are read in the light of the historical facts of our lesson text, that is, in the light of that which happened at Riblah. This shows the importance of considering all the facts before reaching a conclusion.

And the Chaldeans burned the king's house, and the houses of the people, with fire, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem. Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive into Babylon the residue of the people that remained in the city, the deserters also

fell away to him, and the residue of the people that remained. But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left of the poor of the people, that had nothing, in the land, of Judah, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time.

We learn from the parallel in 2 Kings 25 that Nebuzaradan executed the king's orders to burn the city and break down the walls. No motive is given for this destruction, but it may have been done as a matter of revenge, since the walls had kept the Chaldeans out of the city during the time of the siege. But whatever may have prompted the conquerors in their work of destruction, it had a powerful and sobering effect on the captives after they reached Babylon; for, as some one has said, "Blessings brighten as they take their flight." And so the Jews as captives in a strange land could look back to Jerusalem and Judah with reverence for a law which they had recklessly and persistently violated; with ardent love for the city which lay in ruins; and with zealous devotion for the temple which they had so often defiled, and whose divinely-appointed services they had so frequently and so shamefully perverted. Many of them learned their lesson, as their subsequent history shows; but can the same thing be said of those who are now manifesting substantially the same attitude of disregard for the word of God and the church? (Cf. Heb. 10: 25-31.)

By the rivers of Babylon,
There we sat down, yea, we wept,
When we remembered Zion.
Upon the willows in the midst
thereof
We hanged up our harps.
For there they that led us captive
required of us songs,
And they that wasted us required
of us mirth, saying,
Sing us one of the songs of Zion.
How shall we sing Jehovah's song
In a foreign land?
If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget her skill,
Let my tongue cleave to the roof
of my mouth,

If I remember thee not;
 If I prefer not Jerusalem
 Above my chief joy.
 Remember, O Jehovah, against the
 children of Edom
 The day of Jerusalem;
 Who said, Rase it, rase it,
 Even to the foundation thereof.

O daughter of Babylon, that art to
 be destroyed,
 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.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What changes among the great nations
 were taking place at the time of this
 lesson?
 What happened to the great reformation
 of Josiah?
 Who succeeded Josiah as king and under
 what circumstances?
 How long did Jehoahaz reign and what
 was the character of his reign?
 Who were the next kings of Judah and
 how did they come to the throne?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words
 of the golden text spoken?
 What is the practical meaning of sin?
 Illustrate.
 What has always been God's plan with
 reference to sinful people?
 Show how the principle was applied to
 the kingdom of Judah.
 What lesson should we learn from this?
 When does God give people up to sin?
 What is God's continuous message to peo-
 ple today?

The Capture of Jerusalem by the
 Chaldeans

What was the occasion for this siege
 against Jerusalem and how long did it
 continue?
 What warning did Jeremiah give Zedekiah
 regarding the invaders?
 What happened to the prophet as a re-
 sult of his words to the king and the
 people?
 Tell something of the conditions within
 the city as the result of the blockade.

What warnings had been given the people
 of Israel regarding such matters?
 How was the captivity of Judah related
 to God's promise regarding the Mes-
 siah?

The Attempt of Zedekiah and the Men
 of War to Escape

What was Zedekiah's reply to the plead-
 ings of Jehovah to him through Jere-
 miah?
 What reason did the king give for his
 refusal to heed the warning?
 What assurance did the prophet give
 him?
 What further trouble did the disobedience
 of Zedekiah bring to the city and na-
 tion?
 What lesson should we learn from this
 regarding God's discipline?
 Tell of the king's effort to escape and of
 his capture.
 Where was he taken after his capture and
 for what purpose?

The Punishment of the King and the
 Destruction of the City

What probably happened when Zedekiah
 reached Nebuchadnezzar?
 Why was the king of Babylon too severe
 with the king of Judah?
 What was his punishment?
 Discuss the words of Jeremiah and Ezekiel
 regarding this.
 What important lesson should we learn
 from this?
 Who executed the orders of Nebuchadnezzar
 upon the city and the country and
 what were they?
 What effect did the captivity have upon
 the Jews?
 What lesson is there in this for us?

Lesson X—March 10, 1963

THE DECREE OF CYRUS

Lesson Text

Ezra 1: 1-11

1 Now in the first year of Cy'-rus king of Per'-si-a, that the word of Je-ho'-vah by the mouth of Jer'-é-mi'-ah might be accomplished, Je-ho'-vah stirred up the spirit of Cy'-rus king of Per'-si-a, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

2 Thus saith Cy'-rus king of Per'-si-a, All the kingdoms of the earth hath Je-ho'-vah, the God of heaven, given me; and he hath charged me to build him a house in Je-ru'-sa-lem, which is in Ju'-dah.

3 Whosoever there is among you of all his people, his God be with him, and let him go up to Je-ru'-sa-

lem, which is in Ju'-dah, and build the house of Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el (he is God), which is in Je-ru'-sa-lem.

4 And whosoever is left, in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the freewill-offering for the house of God which is in Je-ru'-sa-lem.

5 Then rose up the heads of fathers' houses of Ju'-dah and Ben'-jamin, and the priests, and the Levites, even all whose spirit God had stirred to go up to build the house of Je-ho'-vah which is in Je-ru'-sa-lem.

6 And all they that were round about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, besides all that was willingly offered.

7 Also Cy'-rus the king brought

forth the vessels of the house of Je-ho'-vah, which Neb-u-chad-nez'-zar had brought forth out of Je-ru-sa-lem, and had put in the house of his gods;

8 Even those did Cy'-rus king of Per'-si-a bring forth by the hand of Mith'-re-dath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Shesh-baz'-zar, the prince of Ju'-dah.

9 And this is the number of them: thirty platters of gold, a thousand platters of silver, nine and twenty knives,

10 Thirty bowls of gold, silver bowls of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand.

11 All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Shesh-baz'-zar bring up, when they of the captivity were brought up from Bab'-y-lon unto Je-ru'-sa-lem.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"He retaineth not his anger for ever."* (Micah 7: 18.)
DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Chron. 36: 17-23.

Daily Bible Readings

March 4. M.	Encouragement from a Prophet (Ezek. 34: 1-6)
March 5. T.	Wonderful Blessings Promised (Ezek. 36: 22-28)
March 6. W.	Mourning in Babylon (Psalm 137: 1-6)
March 7. T.	Return to Land Promised (Jer. 29: 10-14)
March 8. F.	Joyful Return (Psalm 126)
March 9. S.	Spiritual Restoration (Psalm 124)
March 10. S.	Temple Rebuilt (Ezra 6: 1-12)

TIME.—536 B.C.

PLACES.—Babylon and Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Cyrus, heads of the fathers' houses, priests, Levites, and others.

Introduction

It was pointed out in the previous lesson that the captivity of Judah was necessary in order to the fulfillment of God's promise regarding the kingdom; and the captivity, like the law, was added because of transgressions (Gal. 3: 19). But when the captivity did become essential to the plan and purposes of God, it was carried out under very definite principles. Although the captivity itself was relatively short in duration, the people themselves were kept in political subjugation for the remainder of the time (nearly six hundred years) before the coming of Christ, except for the period of the Maccabees, when they enjoyed a kind of military independence. The last king in the line of David, that is, the one furthest away from him in the

order of descent, was Jehoiachin, also known as Jeconiah and Coniah (Jer. 22: 24-30). Zedekiah was a descendant of David, but not a descendant of Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24: 17). The next person in the direct line of David to occupy the throne was the Christ (Luke I: 32, 33; Acts 2: 29-32).

Ezekiel who was taken captive to Babylon, along with Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24: 10-16; Ezek. 1: 1-3), in speaking of Zedekiah, said, "And thou, O deadly wounded wicked one, the prince of Israel, whose day is come, in the time of the iniquity of the end, thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Remove the mitre, and take off the crown; this shall be no more the same; exalt that which is low, and abase that which is high. I will over-

turn, overturn, overturn it: this also shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him." (Ezek. 21: 25-27.) When this statement is read in the light of Dan. 2, it will be seen that the probable meaning of the threefold "overturn" was with reference to the *overturning* of one world empire after another, until the time arrived for the establishment of the kingdom which will never be destroyed (Dan. 2: 44); for it was then that he came whose right the crown was; and it was then that Jehovah gave it to him (Acts 2: 36.)

When the captivity became a reality, this message was spoken unto the people, "Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all the captivity, whom I have caused to be carried away captive from Jerusalem unto Babylon, Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them. Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply ye there, and be not diminished. And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray unto Jehovah for it; for in the peace

thereof shall ye have peace. For thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: Let not your prophets that are in the midst of you, and your diviners, deceive you; neither hearken ye to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed. For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith Jehovah. For thus saith Jehovah, After seventy years are accomplished for Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith Jehovah, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you hope in your latter end. And ye shall call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith Jehovah, and I will turn again your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith Jehovah; and I will bring you again unto the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive." (Jer. 29: 4-14.) This was the background against which the decree of Cyrus must be considered.

The Golden Text

"He retaineth not his anger for ever" These words are taken from the closing paragraph of the Book of Micah, and they constitute a doxology, or a psalm of trust in God's pardoning mercy. The full paragraph reads as follows: "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth over the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in lovingkindness. He will again have compassion upon us; he will tread our iniquities under foot; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the lovingkindness to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old." (Micah 7: 18-20.)

Micah lived about a hundred years before the time of this lesson, and in the midst of great corruption; but he was able to see the time when the love of God will gain the ultimate

victory, as the words just quoted so clearly show. Unequal contests could be seen all around him, with evil apparently triumphant; but with his own heart set upon righteousness, he was able to keep before him the unchangeable God. And although sin had to be punished, that could never overshadow the willingness of Jehovah to forgive all who will turn unto him. This was true of the people in Micah's day, it was true of the people who were in Babylon, and it is true of people now. The grace of forgiveness does not depend upon people; it is an attribute of God himself, as is so clearly stated by Isaiah, who was contemporary with Micah: "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake; and I will not remember thy sins." (Isa. 43: 25.) Forgiveness of sins therefore is never due to any merit on man's part, but for God's glory and the honor of his name.

The fact that God does not retain

his anger for ever shows his absolute uniqueness, and so Micah asks, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth over the transgression of the remnant of his heritage?" Only Jehovah can deal so effectively with the problem of sin; and he is therefore incomparable. God's ability to forgive sins removes him far beyond the realm of comparison. This will be readily seen when we remember that forgiveness is contrary to the essential character of everything about which we are acquainted. Nature, for example,

never forgives a breach of her own laws; and the same is true of society and the world in general. Even though a man may atone for his transgressions, he will have to bear the stigma of them to the end of his days. The bird with the broken pinion never soars so high again. It is only by the grace of God that the individual can bring himself to forgive himself. The lesson before us today will be of practical benefit to us, only if we are able to see something of the meaning of God's forgiveness of sin.

The Text Explained

The Proclamation of Cyrus Concerning the Temple

(Ezra 1: 1-4)

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath Jehovah, the God of heaven, given me; and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

Cyrus had been a king some twenty years before the time of this lesson, and so the first year mentioned here was not the first year of his reign; but rather the first year of his reign over Babylon. In speaking of his character and achievements, Dr. J. F. McCurdy says that "Cyrus was one of the greatest men of any age. His genius for pacification and government was much more remarkable than his rare military talent. With an Asiatic career rivaling that of Alexander of Macedon, he was morally far greater than his imitator, though without any of the early advantages of the son of Philip and the pupil of Aristotle. His personal qualities are illustrated by his having won the hearts of many peoples speaking many strange tongues and professing many diverse religions. His administrative measures attest his statesmanship no less than his goodness. His liberation of the Hebrew exiles was the most far-reaching beneficent measure ever devised by a heathen monarch, and, along with the main tenor and purpose of

his life, vindicates his prophetic title, 'The anointed of Jehovah.' " (The People's Bible Encyclopedia, p. 240.)

One of the reasons why Saul of Tarsus was so easily changed from a persecuting zealot to a humble servant of Christ when he saw the light, was the fact that he was honest at heart and always maintained a clear conscience, that is, he always did that which he believed was right. Or, to state the same thing in other words, a man can always be influenced for good when he possesses the qualities of manhood which Saul possessed. This apparently was true of Cyrus, as is implied in the words concerning the stirring up of his spirit by Jehovah. Cyrus was the kind of person who would respond to Jehovah's will regarding him. There is no evidence whatsoever that Jehovah wrought a miracle in causing Cyrus to do his bidding. On the contrary, Cyrus wanted to do the right thing to begin with; and when he learned God's will regarding him, he immediately set about to do it.

Jehovah, more than a hundred years before the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, "saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure, even saying of Jerusalem, She shalt be built; and of the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

"Thus saith Jehovah to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him, and I will loose the loins of kings; to open the doors before him, and the gates shall not be shut: I will go before thee, and make the rough places smooth; I will break in pieces the doors of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron; and I will give the treasures of darkness, and

hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that it is I, Jehovah, who call thee by thy name, even the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel my chosen, I have called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. I am Jehovah, and there is none else; besides me there is no God. I will gird thee, though thou hast not known me; that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides me: I am Jehovah, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I am Jehovah, that doeth all these things.

"I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will make straight all his ways: he shall build my city, and let my exiles go free, not for price nor reward, saith Jehovah of hosts." (Isa. 44: 28-45: 7, 13.)

Josephus says that this vision came to Isaiah one hundred and forty years before the temple was demolished, and that Cyrus learned of it by reading the Book of Isaiah. It is altogether probable that Daniel who was in Babylon when Cyrus began his rule over the former Chaldean kingdom, called his attention to it. Josephus continues, "Accordingly, when Cyrus read this, and admired the Divine power, an earnest desire and ambition seized upon him to fulfill what was so written; so he called for the most eminent Jews that were in Babylon, and said to them, that he gave them leave to go back to their own country, and to rebuild their city Jerusalem, and the temple of God, for that he would be their assistant, and that he would write to the rulers and governors that were in the neighborhood of their country of Judea, that they should contribute to them gold and silver for the building of the temple, and besides that, beasts for their sacrifices." (Ant. 10: 1, 2.)

If Cyrus learned of Jehovah's prediction through Isaiah, is it any wonder that the Persian king gave God the credit for all his empire, and made the resolution to carry out the Divine will? It is true that the names of people today are not mentioned in the Bible, as was true in the case of Cyrus; but it is a pity that our hearts are not stirred to greater actions when we read that

which God has said of us and to us, just as certainly as he spoke concerning Cyrus. (Cf. Heb. 11: 39, 40.)

Whosoever there is among you of all his people, his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of Jehovah, the God of Israel (he is God), which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever is left, in any place where he so-journeth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the freewill-offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.

It had been the policy of the Assyrians and the Chaldeans to uproot captive people, and transplant them in foreign lands; but it appears that Cyrus reversed that policy. The Assyrians were the most ruthless of all, and did not hesitate to crush out the manhood of their captives. The Babylonians, on the other hand, endeavored to utilize the talents and skill of those whom they had conquered, as may be seen in the case of Daniel and the three Hebrew children. But when Cyrus came to the throne, he had a different conception of government. To quote from Dr. McCurdy again, "He knew that the contentment of the subject was the essential condition of national prosperity, and that to secure such contentment a large measure of local freedom was necessary. Hence he encouraged the national aspirations of the peoples whom he found enthralled under the yoke of Babylon. How this love of freedom and righteousness was providentially used for the emancipation of the Hebrews we have seen declared in the prophecies that have been just cited." There is no indication that Cyrus committed his own ways to God; but it is easy to see how Jehovah could use such a man in carrying out the decrees of his own will, a man who was known for his clemency to all subdued people.

The object of Cyrus' proclamation was to grant permission to all the Jews in his kingdom, who wanted to do so, to return to their homeland; and to encourage all who remained behind to assist their brethren who did go in rebuilding Jerusalem and the temple. The matter of going or not going was voluntary; but the very fact that they had the permis-

sion to go had the effect of restoring human dignity. Not every one, even today, can actually engage in the work God has given the church to do; but every one can have a part in encouraging those who are active in the service. "But let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things." (Gal. 6: 6; 1 Cor. 9: 11, 14; Acts 4: 32, 33.)

God's People in Concerted Action

(Ezra 1: 5, 6)

Then rose up the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, even all whose spirit God had stirred to go up to build the house of Jehovah which is in Jerusalem. And all they that were round them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, besides all that was willingly offered.

Judah and Benjamin were the two tribes which made up the kingdom of Judah, or the people who were taken to Babylon; while the heads of the fathers' houses were their paternal leaders. The priests and the Levites were the religious leaders, to whom was committed the direction of the divinely ordained worship of the nation. Those whose spirit God stirred up were the people who had retained their attachment for their homeland and the pure worship of God; and who had the faith and courage to have part in the great work which lay ahead of them. (Cf. Phil. 2: 12, 13.)

There were many among the captives who were born in Babylon, and others who had established themselves there in business, who, because of family and commercial ties, decided to remain where they were; but many of them no doubt contributed generously to the enterprise which was to be undertaken in Jerusalem. "All they that were round about them" were friends and neighbors of other races, but who, because of their favorable disposition toward the Jewish faith, or in keeping with the policy of the government "displayed hearty good-will and great liberality in aiding and promoting the views of the emigrants." Such a disposition is often seen today; and while Christ has nowhere authorized

his followers to solicit aid from others, there is no reason for rejecting such, if it is voluntarily offered. In fact, there is never a Lord's day but that some one in the assembly makes an offering, along with the Lord's people; and whoever heard of the elders seeing to it that the money which was given by a non-member was taken out of the collection, and returned to him?

The Temple Treasures Restored

(Ezra 1: 7-11)

Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of Jehovah, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put in the house of his gods; even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah. And this is the number of them: thirty platters of gold, a thousand platters of silver, nine and twenty knives thirty bowls of gold, silver bowls of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand. All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up, when they of the captivity were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem.

Many Bible students are of the opinion that Sheshbazzar was the Persian name of Zerubbabel, who was appointed governor of Judea. (Cf. Ezra 2: 2; 5: 14; Josephus, Ant. 10: 1, 3.) Of the five thousand and four hundred temple vessels which were returned to Jerusalem, only two thousand, four hundred, and ninety-nine are listed in the record now under consideration. One of the Apocryphal books, 1 Esdras, lists five thousand, four hundred, and sixty-nine. (1 Esdras 2: 13-15; cf. Josephus, Ant. 10: 1, 3.)

Dr. William Smith notes that the Israelites left their Babylonian captivity enriched with free-will offerings of that country, just as their fathers had left the Egyptian bondage with the riches of the land of the Nile, both of which were to be consecrated to the service of Jehovah (cf. Ex. 25: 1ff.). Dr. Smith continues, "But they carried back greater riches than all the treasures of Persia, in the moral gains of their captivity"—

their freedom from the blight of idolatry. That sinful practice was never heard of after the Babylonian captivity. (Cf. Heb. 12: 5-13.)

The One Hundred and Twenty-Sixth Psalm is the psalm of thanksgiving for the return from the captivity. It follows:

When Jehovah brought back those that returned to Zion,

We were like unto them that dream.

Then was our mouth filled with laughter,

And our tongue with singing:

Then said they among the nations,
Jehovah hath done great things for them.

Jehovah hath done great things for us,

Whereof we are glad.

Turn again our captivity, O Jehovah,

As the streams in the South.

They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

He that goeth forth and weepeth,
bearing seed for sowing,

Shall doubtless come again with joy,
bringing his sheaves with him.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

Introduction

What can you say of the general plan and purpose of the captivity of Judah?

Discuss Ezekiel's prediction concerning it.

What advice did Jeremiah give the captives?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were these words spoken or written?

What is the greatest factor in the forgiveness of sins?

What fact shows that Jehovah is incomparable in this respect?

The Proclamation of Cyrus Concerning the Temple

Tell something about the character and achievements of Cyrus.

In what sense did Jehovah stir up his spirit to liberate the Jews?

What prophetic utterances were made concerning him and when?

What important lesson should we learn from this regarding ourselves?

Discuss the difference in the policy of Cyrus and that of his predecessors.

What was involved in Cyrus' proclamation concerning the Hebrews?

God's People in Concerted Action

Who responded to the king's proclamation?

What assistance did they receive and from whom?

What should be the attitude of the Lord's people regarding help from non-members?

What teaching should be done along this line?

The Temple Treasures Restored

Who, in all probability, was Sheshbazzar?

Give reasons for your answer.

How many temple vessels were returned to Jerusalem?

How many were in the count made by Ezra?

What further information do we have on this subject?

What comparison is seen between the captives in Babylon and those who were in bondage in Egypt?

What ultimate use was made of treasures which each received?

What greater blessing did the Jews take with them from Babylon?

What lesson should we learn from this (cf. Heb. 12: 5-13)?

Discuss the psalm of thanksgiving for the return from the captivity.

Lesson XI—March 17, 1963

FOUNDATION OF THE SECOND TEMPLE LAID

Lesson Text

Ezra 3: 8, 12, 13; 4: 1-3

8 Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Je-ru'-sa-lem, in the second month, began Ze-rub'-ba-bel the son of She-al'-ti-el, and Jesh'-u-a the son of Joz'-a-dak, and the rest of their brethren the priests and the Le'-vites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Je-ru'-sa-lem, and appointed the Le'-vites, from twenty years old and upward, to have the oversight of the work of the house of Je-ho'-vah.

.....

12 But many of the priests and Le'-vites and heads of fathers' houses, the old men that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy:

13 So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people; for the people shouted with

a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.

1 Now when the adversaries of Ju'-dah and Ben-ja-min heard that the children of the captivity were building a temple unto Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el;

2 Then they drew near to Ze-rub'-ba-bel, and to the heads of fathers' houses, and said unto them, Let us build with you; for we seek your

God, as ye do; and we sacrifice unto him since the days of E'-sar-had'-don king of As-syr'-i-a, who brought us up hither.

3 But Ze-rub'-ba-bel, and Jesh-u-a, and the rest of the heads of fathers' houses of Is'-ra-el, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us in building a house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el, as king Cy'-rus the king of Per'-si-a hath commanded us.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“We ourselves together will build unto Jehovah, the God of Israel” (Ezra 4: 3.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Ezra 4: 4-6.

Daily Bible Readings

March 11.	M.....	Command to Rebuild the Temple (Ezra 1: 1-11)
March 12.	T.....	The Prophet Haggai's Statement (Hag. 1: 2-8)
March 13.	W.....	Hindrances (Ezra 4: 1-6)
March 14.	T.....	Work Stopped (Ezra 4: 17-24)
March 15.	F.....	Work Resumed (Ezra 6: 1-12)
March 16.	S.....	Dedication of the Temple (Ezra 6: 13-18)
March 17.	S.....	House of the Lord (Psalm 84: 1-12)

TIME.—535 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Zerubbabel, Jeshua, the Jewish people, and their adversaries.

Introduction

The total number of captives who returned to Jerusalem and Judaea from Babylon under the leadership of Zerubbabel numbered about fifty thousand (Ezra 2: 64-67; Neh. 7: 66-69). The majority of them were of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, but the total number probably included some from the other tribes; for Cyrus addressed his proclamation to the Lord's people "throughout all his kingdom" (Ezra 1: 1) which, in addition to those in Babylon, also included those who were carried away by the Assyrians. Those who returned to the homeland are usually referred to as *Jews*, with the disappearance of tribal distinction, except for the purpose of establishing pedigrees. We do not have any way of knowing just how many Jews were in Babylon at the time the permission was granted them to return home; but it is fair to assume that the number was far greater than the total of those who took advantage of the opportunity.

We have seen in the previous lesson that Cyrus manifested a very lenient attitude toward the people under his rule, and this, along with

Jeremiah's counsel to those from Jerusalem and Judaea (Jer. 29: 4-6), no doubt resulted in many of the people's becoming satisfied with their new homes and surroundings, and the businesses which they had established. It is also probable that many of them lacked the faith to leave a land where they were economically and politically secure, and undertake the long journey of some eight hundred miles to the small and relatively unproductive country where their lives would be marked by hardships and limitations. Some, however, followed later, while others remained and formed that which came to be known as the "Dispersion;" and how numerous these were in all the provinces of the empire may be learned from the Book of Esther.

When the people reached the land of Judaea, there were many things to discourage them, as we look at the situation from the human point of view. People were living in parts of the country who were not Jews, and they, of course, were not friendly with the returning exiles. If the former homes of the oldest among those who were returning were still

there, they would be in a deplorable state of repair. The beloved city of Jerusalem, along with the temple, had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, and the walls broken down. The fire on the altar had long since ceased to burn, and it is doubtful if there were any at that time who made even a pretense of worshipping God according to the law of Moses. But even so, something of the feeling of those pious pilgrims when they approached the holy precincts may be learned from such psalms as the Eighty-fourth. The first seven verses of Ezra 3 will give us some idea of the conditions in Jerusalem just prior to the laying of the foundation of the temple:

"And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem. Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt-offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God. And they set the altar upon its base; for fear was upon them because of the peoples of the countries: and they offered burnt-offerings thereon unto Jehovah, even burnt-offerings morning and evening. And they kept the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt-offerings by number, according to the ordinance, as the duty of every day required; and afterward the continual burnt-offering, and the

offerings of the new moons, and of all the set feasts of Jehovah that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a freewill-offering unto Jehovah. From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt-offerings unto Jehovah: but the foundation of the temple of Jehovah was not yet laid. They gave money also unto the masons, and to the carpenters; and food, and drink, and oil, unto them of Sidon, and to them of Tyre, to bring cedar-trees from Lebanon to the sea, unto Joppa, according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia."

Although the house of Jehovah itself was not available for their full service, the people of God began where they could, and did the best they were able to do. They built the altar, and conducted the worship in connection with it, and otherwise did those things which had been ordained for them. Hostile people were about them, who brought fear into their hearts; but they knew that the Lord would bless and protect them, if they would do his will. They also provided the money and other means of obtaining the necessary materials for the actual construction of the house of Jehovah. Many Christians today can learn a very valuable lesson from these people. In many instances the brethren have no house of worship in which to meet, but if they will show the same zeal for doing what they can, that the Jews did on the occasion now before us, they will have both the blessings of God and freedom from the derision of hostile opponents.

The Golden Text

This part of our lesson is found in the principal text, and will be considered in its proper place.

The Text Explained

The Beginning of the Work of Rebuilding the Temple

(Ezra 3: 8)

Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the rest of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem, and appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and

upward, to have the oversight of the work of the house of Jehovah.

The second month of the year is what we know as the last half of April and the first half of May. The Jewish people had two years, one the civil year which began the middle of September, and the other the religious or sacred year which began the middle of March. The sacred year apparently had its beginning with the exodus. (See Ex. 12: 1; 23: 15.) The name of the first month of the religious year was Abib (the

month of green ears), but it apparently was changed to *Nisan* after the exile. (See Neh. 2: 1; Esth. 3: 7.)

It required time to make the needed preparation to begin the work on the temple, but when they were ready to start the foundation was laid with great solemnities, and amid the sound of trumpets and the voices of the singers. "And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of Jehovah, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise Jehovah, after the order of David king of Israel. And they sang one to another in praising and giving thanks unto Jehovah, saying, For he is good, for his lovingkindness endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised Jehovah, because the foundation of the house of Jehovah was laid." (Ezra 3: 10, 11.)

So far as the context is concerned, there was no one among the people of Jehovah whose heart was not in the work, and they moved as one man. (See verse 1.) Those in the lead saw to it that every person was in his place, and was doing that which he was both fitted and expected to do. This is the kind of spirit which, under God, will always succeed. The late Henry Ford is reported to have said, "Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success." This is certainly a lesson which congregations of the Lord's people all over the world should learn and put into practice.

We are not to think of the temple as being a type of our meetinghouses, but rather of the church itself. "Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroyeth the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, and such are ye." (1 Cor. 3: 16, 17.) "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; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are

built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit." (Eph. 2: 19-22.)

If Christian people everywhere today would think of themselves as building a spiritual house or sanctuary (see marginal note) for the Lord, and would imbibe the spirit which characterized the Jews at the time of our lesson, it would be difficult to conceive of the great progress which would be made. Material buildings in which to meet are essential, and should be provided when people are able; but it is a fact, easily observable in many places, that brethren frequently expend more time, energy, and money in erecting the physical plant, than they do in trying to build up the church itself. If due consideration is given to the spiritual, the material phase of the work will follow in due order. "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me. . . . And my God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4: 13, 19.)

The Manifestation of Opposite Emotions

(Ezra 3: 12, 13)

But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses, the old men that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people; for the people shouted with a loud, shout, and the noise was heard afar off.

If the chronology which is being followed in these lessons is correct, there were only fifty-two years between the burning of the temple of Solomon and the laying of the foundation of what came to be known as Zerubbabel's temple; and that, of course, would make it possible for many of the older men to see both buildings. Matthew Henry thinks that it was a great blessing to the returning exiles, that they had the lives of so many of the priests and Levites lengthened out, who could tell them what they remembered about the first temple and the glory of Jerusalem, and thereby cause them to want to return.

It appears that the difference be-

tween the two temples was not so much in their sizes, as in their glory.

(Cf. Ezra 6: 3-5.) After discussing the available information regarding the sizes of the two temples, Smith's Bible Dictionary has this to say:

"From these dimensions we gather, that if 'the priests and Levites and elders of families were disconsolate at seeing how much more sumptuous the old temple was than the one which on account of their poverty they had just been able to erect' (Ezra 3: 12; Josephus, Ant. 11: 4, 2), it certainly was not because it was smaller, as almost every dimension had been increased one third; but it may have been that the carving and the gold, and other ornaments of Solomon's temple far surpassed this, and the pillars of the portico and the veils may all have been far more splendid, so also probably were the vessels; and all this is what a Jew would mourn over far more than mere architectural splendor." (Vol. IV, p. 3202.)

Adam Clarke supposes that the inferiority of the second temple was also due to the lack of the ark of the covenant, the heavenly fire, the mercy-seat, the heavenly manna, Aaron's rod that budded, the Shechinah, the spirit of prophecy, and most likely the Urim and Thummim. The younger people, however, if they actually knew of these divine furnishings, probably did not realize their significance; but with the prospects of a place of worship in their own land to which they had been restored, they could not suppress their feeling of joy. They could not, of course, compare this temple with that of Solomon; and they could not, for that reason, be affected in the way which characterized their elders. It should be observed, though, that the loud crying of the one, and the equally noisy shouting of the other, were both due to the same basic motive, namely, a vital interest in the house of Jehovah.

But the prophet Haggai, who may have been born in Babylon, but who apparently came to Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel, comforted the mourners by assuring them that the glory of the latter house would eventually exceed that of the former, because of the coming of the Lord, that is, Christ Jesus, to it, and filling it with his glory. "In

the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of Jehovah by Haggai the prophet, saying, Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, saying, Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes as nothing? Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith Jehovah; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith Jehovah, and work: for I am with you, saith Jehovah of hosts, according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, and my Spirit abode among you: fear ye not. For thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations; and the precious things of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith Jehovah of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith Jehovah of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith Jehovah of hosts; and in this place I will give peace, saith Jehovah of hosts." (Hag. 2: 1-9.)

This should be enough to show us that what is sometimes looked upon as "inferior" may, after all, become the greatest, especially, if we will allow God to have his way with us. We also should learn from this to do our best to rebuild our heritage, after we have all but failed with our first opportunities. The Lord will always give any person who will try a further chance to make good in this life, but delay to take hold of the new opportunity may prove fatal to him. This does not mean that he can always rise to the heights of his original possibilities; but it does mean that he can be saved, and that is the greatest blessing of all.

The Offer of Adversaries Rejected

(Ezra 4: 1-3)

Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity were building a temple unto Jehovah, the God of Israel, then they drew near to

Zerubbabel, and to the heads of fathers' houses, and said unto them, Let us build with you; for we seek your God, as ye do; and we sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us up hither. But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of fathers' houses of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us in building a house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto Jehovah, the God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us.

In commenting on this section of our lesson, Robert Jamieson says, "A very interesting explanation of this passage has been recently obtained from the Assyrian sculptures. On a large cylinder, deposited in the British Museum, there is inscribed a long and perfect copy of the annals of Esar-haddon, in which the details are given of a large deportation of Israelites from Palestine, and a consequent settlement of Babylonian colonists in their place. It is a striking confirmation of the statement made in this passage."

Soon after the foundation of the temple was laid, the foreign settlers of the land came forward with the proposition that they be allowed to join in the effort to rebuild the temple. It is interesting to note that the king who brought them to Palestine, Esar-haddon, was the son and successor of Sennacherib (2 Kings 18: 13ff.), and the grandson of Sargon who completed Shalmaneser's three-year siege of Samaria (2 Kings 17: 1-6; Isa. 20: 1) and took the people of Israel into bondage. Esar-haddon was the father of Assurbanipal who "is generally believed to be the great and noble Osnappar" of Ezra 4: 10. The request of the inhabitants of the land to assist in building the temple

was indignantly rejected by the Jews, who regarded them as idolaters and adversaries.

Paul and his companions in Philippi had basically the same experience when they were preaching the gospel in that city. The maid with "a spirit of divination" sought to add her testimony to that of Paul and his company, in proclaiming the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. But Paul did not want it to appear that he had any connection with evil spirits, and he promptly ordered the demon to come out of her. This attitude must still characterize the Lord's people today; for God will not permit his work to be done by the joint efforts of his people and those who are not his people. (Cf. Gen. 3: 15; 2 Cor. 6: 14-7: 1; Rev. 18: 4.)

It did not take the people who made the request to have part in building the temple long to demonstrate that they were indeed *adversaries*. "Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, and hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia. And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem." (Ezra 4: 4-6.) "Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem; and it ceased until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia." (Verse 24.) It was the result of the stirring appeals of Haggai and Zechariah, some sixteen years later, that the work on the temple was renewed. (Cf. Ezra 5: 1, 2; and the books which bear the prophets' names; read also the fifth and sixth chapters of Ezra.)

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?
Repeat the golden text.
Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

About how many of the captivities returned to Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel?
How did they come to return at this time?
What was the probable reason for more not going back to Jerusalem?
Tell something of the conditions they found in the homeland.

How must they have felt when they saw the ruins of the city and the temple?
What did the people do before they began work on the temple and why?
What lesson is there in all this for us today?
How can the Lord's people best silence the derisions of their opponents?

The Beginning of the Work of Rebuilding the Temple

When did the work on the temple actually start?

Tell something of the manner in which the people of Israel reckoned their time.
 Why were they so long in getting started on the house of Jehovah?
 Discuss the spirit which actuated all the returned exiles.
 Why will this spirit always succeed?
 Show how these principles can be applied by the Lord's people today.
 Is the temple of the Old Testament a type of our meetinghouses? Give reasons for your answer.
 Where should Christian people today put the emphasis in their work?
 What promise has the Lord made to all who manifest this attitude?

The Manifestation of Opposite Emotions
 How long was it between the destruction of the first temple and the laying of the foundation of the second?
 In what way did the old men probably prove to be a blessing to the younger people?
 How were the two groups affected when they saw the foundation of the new temple?

Why was this true?
 What were the probable differences between the two buildings?
 In what way did the prophet Haggai comfort the sorrowing ones?
 How can these principles be applied in our cases?
 What will the Lord always do for people who want to do better?
 What must they always do if they want to succeed?

The Offer of Adversaries Rejected
 What confirmation is now available for the facts of this section of our lesson?
 Why did the people who were living in the land want to help the Jews build the temple?
 Why did Zerubbabel and his brethren reject their offer?
 How did the strangers react to this rejection?
 What should be our attitude under similar circumstances?
 What happened to the work on the temple and why?
 Under what circumstances did the Jews begin their efforts again?

Lesson XII—March 24, 1963

EZRA'S VISIT TO JERUSALEM

Lesson Text

Ezra 8: 21-32

21 Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river A-ha'-va, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek of him a straight way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.

22 For I was ashamed to ask of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way, because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them that seek him, for good; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him.

23 So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was entreated of us.

24 Then I set apart twelve of the chiefs of the priests, even Sher-e-bi'-ah, Hash-a-bi'-ah, and ten of their brethren with them,

25 And weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, even the offering for the house of our God, which the king, and his counsellors, and his princes, and all Is'-ra-el there present, had offered:

26 I weighed into their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver,

and silver vessels a hundred talents; of gold a hundred talents;

27 And twenty bowls of gold, of a thousand darics; and two vessels of fine bright brass, precious as gold.

28 And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto Je-ho'-vah, and the vessels are holy; and the silver and the gold are a freewill-offering unto Je-ho'-vah, the God of your fathers.

29 Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them before the chiefs of the priests and the Le'-vites, and the princes of the fathers' houses of Is'-ra-el, at Je-ru'-sa-lem, in the chambers of the house of Je-ho'-vah.

30 So the priests and the Le'-vites received the weight of the silver and the gold, and the vessels, to bring them to Je-ru'-sa-lem unto the house of our God.

31 Then we departed from the river A-ha'-va on the twelfth day of the first month, to go unto Je-ru'-sa-lem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy and the lier-in-wait by the way.

32 And we came to Je-ru'-sa-lem, and abode there three days.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"The hand of our God is upon all them that seek him, for good"* (Ezra 8: 22.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Ezra 9: 5-15.

Daily Bible Readings

March 18. M.....	Glory of the Lord's House (Psalm 122: 1-9)
March 19. T.....	Artaxerxes Letter to Ezra (Ezra 7: 11-17)
March 20. W.....	Visit to Jerusalem (Ezra 7: 6-10)
March 21. T.....	Nehemiah Decides to Visit Jerusalem (Neh. 1: 1-3)
March 22. F.....	Levites Are Sent for (Ezra 8: 1-20)
March 23. S.....	Conditions Among the People (Ezra 9: 1-15)
March 24. S.....	Mixed Marriages (Ezra 10: 15)

TIME.—458 B.C.

PLACES.—The river Ahava in Babylon and Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Ezra and the people with him.

Introduction

Ezra was of the priestly family, being a descendant of Aaron, through Eleazar, Zadok, and Hilkiah. He apparently was born and reared in Babylon, and "was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which Jehovah, the God of Israel, had given." It seems that he had heard some disconcerting reports of conditions in Jerusalem, and he asked the king, who at that time was Artaxerxes the son of Xerxes, also known as Ahasuerus (see the Book of Esther), to allow him to go to the city of his fathers and see what could be done about them; "for Ezra had set his heart to seek the law of Jehovah, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and ordinances." The king "granted him all his request, according to the hand of Jehovah his God upon him." A company of his brethren went with him, and the journey from Babylon to Jerusalem took exactly four months. (See Ezra 7: 1-10.) This was seventy-eight years after Cyrus first commissioned Zerubbabel to return to his homeland, and some fifty-seven years after the temple was completed.

If one will remember that the king who granted Ezra the permission to go to Jerusalem was the son of the Persian ruler who was married to Queen Esther, and that Mordecai had been, and may still have been, the empire's prime minister, it will not be difficult for him to see a possible reason for Ezra's favor in the eyes of Artaxerxes. At any rate, whether Mordecai was still in power or not, it is not unreasonable to think that the influence of both Esther and Mordecai was still felt in the royal circles. (Read Esth. 10.) William Smith, in his History of the Bible, says that Ezra occupied a place toward the end of the Old Testament

period which resembles in many respects that of Moses at its beginning. It has already been pointed out that he was of the priestly family, being the grandson of Hilkiah, the high priest in the reign of Josiah; and that he was distinguished for his knowledge of the Scriptures, and his devotion to Jehovah. One only has to read the record in Ezra and Nehemiah in order to see that every step he took was marked by some devout acknowledgment of the help of Jehovah—"according to the good hand of his God upon him."

We saw in our previous lesson that the work on the temple, after the foundation was laid, was suspended for about sixteen years; and that it was resumed at the insistence of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. It was some five or six years later that the temple was completed and dedicated. But even after Darius had issued his decree that the governor "beyond the River," who had questioned the right of the Jews to build the temple, give them his full and complete cooperation "with all diligence," opposition to their work did not cease, and hindrances of various kinds continued to plague them. Many of the Jews in Jerusalem had themselves forsaken the law of Jehovah, so much so that nothing short of a reformation could bring order out of the distressing situation. (See Ezra, chapters 9, 10.) And so, as Zerubbabel had taken the lead in rebuilding the temple, Ezra now came forward as the reformer and the restorer of the ancient order.

But Ezra, in the providence of God, was in Jerusalem to do more than to call the people back to a renewed spiritual life; he was there to do a work, without which we probably would not have the Old Testament in

its present form today. It is generally recognized by Bible students that it was under the leadership of Ezra that the Old Testament Canon was completed. That great work was undertaken by a group of one hundred and twenty Hebrew scholars, known as The Great Synagogue, with Ezra as its president. The men of this synagogue were also referred to as "the successors of the prophets." The days of the Old Testament prophets were about over, and the silence which followed Malachi was not broken for some four hundred years, not until the voice of John the Baptist was heard in the wilderness of Judaea, calling the people to repentance.

Smith's Dictionary of the Bible says that the work of The Great Synagogue "included the revision of the text, and this was settled by the introduction of the vowel points, which have been handed down to us by the Masoretic editors," that is, the notes and punctuation added to a consonantal text, which came to be known as the *Masoretic text*, and which, according to Webster's Dictionary, "is the basis of all the editions of the Old Testament." The art of writing has a long history, and it certainly must have undergone many changes since the days of Moses. (Cf. the difference between Old and Modern English letters.) No one, for example, knows whether Moses wrote his books in cuneiform, that is, the wedge-shaped or arrow-headed characters used by the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians, or the hieroglyphs of Egypt, in which he was educated (Acts 7: 22). It is

inconceivable that he wrote the Pentateuch in the form in which we have it today. Some one therefore at sometime must have put the ancient writings in the form in which they are now preserved; and Jewish tradition says that the work was done by Ezra and the other members of The Great Synagogue. In writing on this subject, William Sanford LaSor says:

"I understand that to mean that all of the existing Scriptures were cast in 'modern' spelling, 'square' letters, perhaps with some of the explanatory notes (such as, 'and it is there even to this day,' etc.), and other editorial elements. Jewish tradition moreover says that it was done by the inspiration of the Lord. I understand that to mean that the Lord inspired Ezra in such a way that the inspiration imparted to the original authors was not destroyed by Ezra's editorial work. But whether my interpretations are accurate or not, it is certain that the Old Testament, as we have it today, came into existence about or not long after the time of Ezra. To whom else shall we attribute it? Where is there any other name of a man of sufficient stature to accomplish the task? Until such can be presented, I am content to say that Ezra was the man raised up of God to bring the restored exiles back to his word, to inaugurate the office of the scribe for preservation and interpretation of the Scriptures, and to put into their hands the Old Testament in its final form." This is also substantially the view of Robert Milligan, as may be seen by reading his book, *Reason and Revelation*, p. 154ff.

The Golden Text

This portion of our lesson is found in the principal text, and it will be considered in its proper place.

The Text Explained

A Fast Proclaimed and a Prayer
for Guidance
(Ezra 8: 21-23)

Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek of him a straight way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. For I was ashamed to ask of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in

the way, because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them that seek him, for good; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was entreated of us.

The Ahava was a small river in Babylonia on whose banks Ezra assembled the people who were going with him to Jerusalem to prepare them for the journey. Ezra had ex-

pressed his confidence in God, and in his gracious protection for his people; and it was his purpose to put that faith into practice. The writer of Hebrews says, "And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him." (Heb. 11: 6.) This is to say that those who are acceptable to God must believe (1) that he does exist, and (2) that he will do that which he has promised. Ezra had represented to the king his supreme faith in God as the object of his worship, and his utmost confidence in both his ability and willingness to protect those who put their trust in him, as well as his power and determination to keep the evil ones from them; and with that kind of situation in which he found himself, he must either demonstrate his faith by his works, or give the king reason to suspect either God's power to protect his people, or Ezra's confidence in that power, or both.

Any one who reads the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah will get the impression that Ezra was a very devout man, and it is fair to assume that he had prayed often in private for the very blessings which he was seeking here in public; but, as Matthew Henry notes, when public mercies are being sought, public prayers must be offered for them, so that all who are to share in them may have the opportunity of joining in the request for them. But before offering the prayer for protection, Ezra wanted all the people, along with himself, to humble themselves before God; so that they might be prepared for the blessing which they sought from Jehovah. "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." (1 Pet. 3: 12.) "But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and that trembleth at my word." (Isa. 66: 2b.) Ezra not only knew Jehovah; he also knew what he expects of his people who call upon him in prayer. We are therefore not surprised to read, "and he was entreated of us." (Cf. Prov. 3: 5, 6; Phil. 4: 6, 7.)

The action of Ezra puts many Christians of this day to shame. They profess to believe that God can and

will bless them in many ways; but when the testing time comes, they find themselves turning in other directions for their help. For example, in the sixth chapter of Matthew, Jesus teaches against anxiety and the dependence upon material things for the necessities of life, assuring his people that their "heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (See Matt. 6: 32, 33.) After professing to believe what the Lord has taught, including the statement just quoted, and claiming to have enough confidence in him to lead us to believe that he will do that which he has promised to do; should we not, like Ezra, be ashamed to let the world see us resort to doubt and worry when the testing time comes, and thereby show our lack of faith in him? Has there ever been known even one person who could truthfully say that the Lord failed him in any hour, even the darkest, while he was doing his best to serve him? Ezra had more concern for God's glory than for his own safety, and we, like him, should be willing to expose ourselves to anything, rather than to leave the impression on the mind of a single person that God can't be depended upon to fulfill his promise under any circumstance. When we thus learn to depend upon God, there will be more prayer and fasting on our part, and greater efforts put forth to learn and do his will.

The record of Ezra's journey to Jerusalem, along with that of his company, fully confirms the statement that Jehovah was entreated of them; and the same will be true in any situation with us, if we will manifest the same spirit which characterized Ezra. (Cf. Heb. 13: 5, 6; Phil. 4: 19; Heb. 4: 14-16.)

'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus,
Just to take him at his word;
Just to rest upon his promise;
Just to know, "Thus saith the
Lord."

Jesus, Jesus, how I trust him!
How I've proved him o'er and
o'er!

Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus!
O for grace to trust him more!

Taking Thought for Things
Honorable in the Sight of God
and Man

(Ezra 8: 24-30)

Then I set apart twelve of the chiefs of the priests, even Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them, and weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, even the offering for the house of our God, which the king, and his counsellors, and his princes, and all Israel there present, had offered:

I weighed into their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels a hundred talents; of gold a hundred talents; and twenty bowls of gold, of a thousand darics; and two vessels of fine bright brass, precious as gold.

When we read about "chief priests" we usually think of those who were the heads of the twenty-four courses into which David divided the priests (1 Chron. 24: 1-19), or perhaps the principal ones in a given group. The "high priest" was, of course, a chief priest, but he always stood in a class to himself. If "priests" are meant in the passage now under consideration, they were the principal ones among the priests in Babylon; but the same names which are given here are also found in Neh. 12: 24, and they are there called the "chiefs of the Levites." The "talent" was the largest weight among the Hebrews, being used for metals; and it seems reasonable to infer from Ex. 38: 24-29 that a talent of gold, silver, or brass was a talent of the same weight. It has been estimated that a Hebrew talent weighed ninety-three pounds and twelve ounces, avoirdupois; and was the full weight for an able-bodied man to carry (cf. 2 Kings 5: 23). A "daric" was a Persian coin approximately equivalent to an American five dollars gold piece.

It is well to note that Ezra acted in keeping with his prayers. He was honest in seeking the help of God, and he was honest in his dealings with the material things which were committed to his care. Many church leaders have needlessly brought themselves under suspicion, simply because they have neglected to take the proper precaution regarding such matters as the offering which is received when the church meets for

the regular Lord's day worship. "Avoiding this, that any man should blame us in the matter of this bounty which is ministered by us: for we take thought for things honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." (2 Cor. 8: 20, 21.) This is a lesson which church leaders, and especially church treasurers, should learn and follow.

And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto Jehovah, and the vessels are holy; and the silver and the gold are a freewill-offering unto Jehovah, the God of your fathers. Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them before the chiefs of the priests and the Levites, and the princes of the fathers' houses of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of Jehovah. So the priests and the Levites received the weight of the silver and the gold, and the vessels, to bring them to Jerusalem unto the house of our God.

In this section of our lesson, Ezra tells the men who received the treasures why they were given to them: they were the men who were the God-appointed custodians of such things. The vessels were holy, the money was holy, and they themselves were holy; that is, all of them had been set apart for sacred use and service, and it was therefore fitting that the priests and Levites should assume this responsibility. The divine arrangement which has been made in the church is intended to provide for all the needs which may come before the body of Christ. There are elders to take the oversight, deacons to assist them, especially with reference to the material aspects of the church, preachers and teachers to instruct both within and without the congregation, and members to serve as they have opportunity. If all of this is recognized, and each one is given the opportunity to discharge his special assignment, the church is certain to prosper (cf. Eph. 4: 16); but if these various assignments are disregarded, the work is certain to be hindered.

The Journey to and the Arrival
in Jerusalem
(Ezra 8: 31, 32)

Then we departed from the river Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem:

and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy and the lie-in-wait by the way. And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days. It has already been pointed out that the journey from Babylon to Jerusalem required exactly four months. "And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. For upon the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon; and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him." (Ezra 7: 8, 9.) They left Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, after spending three days there (Ezra 8: 15), which implies that they were nine days in coming that far. It was necessary for them to move slowly, and by short and easy stages, due to the fact that the caravan was large and included women and children, and their substance. In commenting on this journey, Jamieson says, "Their health and security were

marvellous during so long a journey. The pilgrim-caravans of the present day perform long journeys through the wildest deserts of the East under the protection of a firman from the Porte, and an escort of soldiers. But for a large body—composed, as that of Ezra, of some thousands of men, women, and children, unaccustomed to travel, undisciplined to order, and without military strength, and with so large an amount of treasure tempting the cupidity of the marauding plundering tribes of the desert,—to accomplish a journey so long and so arduous in perfect safety, is one of the most astonishing events recorded in history. Nothing but the vigilant care of a superintending Providence could have brought them securely to their destination."

After reaching Jerusalem, they abode there three days before they delivered the silver, gold, and vessels to the proper ones. They then offered a sacrifice unto Jehovah, and delivered the king's letter to the officials. (See Ezra 8: 33-36.)

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of today's lesson?
Repeat the golden text.
Give time, places, and persons.

Introduction

Who was Ezra?
Why did he want to go to Jerusalem?
Who was the king who gave him the permission to go?
What was the relative time of Ezra's journey, that is, with reference to other dates?
What probable reason influenced the king to favor Ezra?
Discuss the fitness of Ezra for the great work he undertook.
What was the general condition in Palestine at the time of Ezra's journey?
What other great work did he do, in addition to his reformatory efforts?
Why was it necessary to "re-write" the Old Testament Scriptures?
Who was associated with Ezra in this work?
Give reasons for thinking that Ezra was or was not inspired to complete the Old Testament canon.

A Fast Proclaimed and a Prayer for Guidance

What and where was Ahava, and why was the caravan there?
Why did Ezra feel that it was necessary to fit the people for the journey?
Why the fast and the prayer at this time?
What lesson in faith should we learn from this?
What are the two essential elements of the faith which pleases God?
Why did Ezra require that the whole as-

sembly join in the fast and the prayer for guidance?
How do many Christians compare with Ezra in this respect? Give reasons for your answer.
What was the result of the fast and the petition which they made to God?
What New Testament lesson should we learn from all this?

Taking Thought for Things Honorable in the Sight of God and Man

What special men did Ezra call to his service?
What were the "talent" and the "danic"?
Why was Ezra so careful with reference to the treasuries they were taking to Jerusalem?
What important lesson should church leaders learn from this?
Why are so many brethren so careless about such matters?
Why did Ezra put the holy things into the hand of the priests and Levites?
What arrangements has the Lord made in this respect in the church?
Why do many people disregard this? that is, why isn't every one given his work to do?

The Journey to and the Arrival in Jerusalem

How long did it take Ezra and his company to make the journey to Jerusalem?
Under what conditions did they have to travel?
How long did they remain at Ahava?
What can you say about the remarkable-ness of the journey?
What did they do after reaching Jerusalem?

Lesson XIII—March 31, 1963

NEHEMIAH REBUILDS THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM

Lesson Text

Neh. 4: 6-18

6 So we built the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto half the height thereof: for the people had a mind to work.

7 But it came to pass that, when San-bal-lat, and Tô-bi-ah, and the A-ra-bi-ans, and the Am-mon-ites, and the Ash-d6d-ites, heard that the repairing of the walls of Je-ru-salem went forward, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth;

8 And they conspired all of them together to come and fight against Je-ru-sa-lem, and to cause confusion therein.

9 But we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.

10 And Ju-dah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.

11 And our adversaries said. They shall not know, neither see, till we come into the midst of them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease.

12 And it came to pass that, when the Jews that dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times from all places, Ye must return unto us.

13 Therefore set I in the lowest

parts of the space behind the wall, in the open places, I set there the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

14 And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, who is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

15 And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work.

16 And it came to pass from that time forth, that half of my servants wrought in the work, and half of them held the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the coats of mail; and the rulers were behind all the house of Ju-dah.

17 They that builded the wall and they that bare burdens laded themselves; every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other held his weapon;

18 And the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“So we built the wall; . . . for the people had a mind to work.” (Neh. 4: 6.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Neh. 2: 1-4.

Daily Bible Readings

March 25. M.	.....Nehemiah's Grief (Neh. 1: 1-11)
March 26. T.	.....Permission to Visit Jerusalem (Neh. 2: 1-20)
March 27. W.	.....Organization of Workers (Neh. 3: 1-5)
March 28. T.	.....Prominence of Those Involved (Neh. 3: 6-14)
March 29. F.	.....Participation of Levites (Neh. 3: 15-27)
March 30. S.	.....Priests Work Along with Others (Neh. 3: 28-32)
March 31. S.	.....Defense of the Work (Neh. 4: 15-23)

TIME.—444 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Nehemiah, Sanballat, Tobiah, and others.

Introduction

The third company of exiles to go from Babylon to Jerusalem were led by Nehemiah, a man who was prob-

ably born and reared in the land of the captivity. At the time he appears in history, he was living in

Shushan the palace, and was cupbearer to the king. One of his brethren, along with certain other men, had returned from Judah; and when Nehemiah asked them "concerning the Jews that had escaped, that were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem," their reply was, "The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire." This report greatly distressed Nehemiah, and he sat down and wept and mourned certain days; and then with fasting and prayer; he called upon God for help.

About three or four months later, as Nehemiah was performing his duty as cupbearer to the king, the latter noticed that his servant was sad. This was unusual, for Nehemiah says that he had not been beforetime sad in the king's presence. He then says that the king asked him, "Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart." This caused Nehemiah to be sore afraid, and he said, "Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?" The king then asked Nehemiah what request he wanted to make, but before he answered him, he prayed to the God of heaven. After that, he requested that he might be sent to Jerusalem that he might rebuild it. After the king inquired as to the length of time he would be away and when he would return; and when Nehemiah had set him a time, his request, along with further requests for letters to the governors beyond the River, and to the keeper of the king's forest for supplies, was granted, "according to the good hand of my God upon me." (Read Neh. 1: 1-2: 8.)

After reaching Jerusalem, Nehemiah apparently found conditions worse than he had anticipated; at least they were most distressing. One of the first things he did was to make a secret survey at night, so that he might get a picture of that which needed to be done. "And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God put into my heart to do for Jerusalem; neither was

there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon. . . . And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work." (Neh. 2: 12, 16.)

After the inspection tour, Nehemiah made known his plans in these words, "Ye see the evil case that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. And I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me, as also of the king's words that he had spoken unto me." The response to his plea was both immediate and unanimous: "And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for the good work." However, we should not overlook the fact that there was some serious opposition on the part of the foreigners who were then living in the country, foremost among whom were Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem. Their first reaction to the mission of Nehemiah was that of grief—"it grieved them exceedingly, for that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel" (Neh. 2: 10); but when they heard of the actual plans and the resolution for rebuilding, "they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king? Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem." (Read Neh. 2: 17-20.) Chapter 3 gives a detailed account of the work which was done on the gates and the wall.

Something of the opposition which Nehemiah encountered, and his method of meeting it, may be learned from the verses immediately preceding the lesson text. "But if came to pass that, when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What are these feeble Jews doing? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will

they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, seeing they are burned? Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they are building, if a fox go up, he shall break down their stone wall. Hear, O our God; for we are despised;

and turn back their reproach upon their own head, and give them up for a spoil in a land of captivity; and cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee; for they have provoked thee to anger before the builders." (Verses 1-5.)

The Golden Text

This part of our lesson is found in the lesson text, and it will be treated in its proper place.

The Text Explained

The Secret of Nehemiah's Success (Neh. 4: 6)

So we built the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto half the height thereof: for the people had a mind to work. It is refreshing to see that although Sanballat and Tobiah expressed their contempt for Nehemiah and his associates, they did not stoop to the low level of seeking human vengeance. Instead, they took the matter to God in prayer, and then went on with their work. Or, to state the same thing in other words, the reproaches of their enemies did not discourage them; it rather quickened them in their activities which they had resolved upon. Their hearts were in their work; and where there is heart service in the work of the Lord, there will be no failure.

We are sometimes led to say that the primary ingredient in the success of the work of re-building the walls of Jerusalem was the fact that the people had a mind to work. But if we will consider all the facts in the case, it will be seen that that is only a part of the story. If there was any one thing which stood out above everything else, it was the leadership which Nehemiah provided. His good judgment and wise leadership had the effect of conditioning the people for their part in the undertaking. Nehemiah saw to it that he had all the facts clearly in his mind before he even announced his plans, and he had also seen to it that the needed materials would be available when they were ready to begin their activities (Neh. 2: 7, 8). And in addition to all the material factors, Nehemiah always maintained the right attitude of mind toward both the work and the workmen.

If church leaders today, at least

in many instances, would see to it that they are governed by the same principles which guided Nehemiah, they would see a great difference in the results they would like to see accomplished. But instead of that, many are wont to lay the blame on the people when the work lags, for a lack of a mind to do that which they would like to see done; whereas, the real trouble is in the lack of wise leadership. When elders plan the work which needs to be done, and are able to visualize the success which should be attained; when they are familiar with the details which are essential to the completion of the project, and have the proper attitude toward God and the people, there will be little doubt about the success of the undertaking.

Conspiracy Defeated by Prayer and Diligence (Neh. 4: 7-14)

But it came to pass that, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem went forward, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth; and they conspired all of them together to come and fight against Jerusalem, and to cause confusion therein.

The rapid progress which Nehemiah and his brethren were making in accomplishing the work which they had set out to do, despite all the predictions which their enemies had made to the contrary, goaded the mixed population of the land to frenzy; and they, dreading the danger from the growing greatness of the Jews, formed a conspiracy to surprise them, demolish the work they had thus far done, and either intimidate

the builders or disperse them. As has already been pointed out, these enemies of the Jews first sought to frighten them by ridicule and scorn; but when that failed, they next proposed to use force—a conspiracy of Samaritans, Arabians, Ammonites, and Philistines; but what difference did that make, so long as they could direct their efforts toward the halting of the work of a common enemy!

It is remarkable, even today, how people of different interests will unite their efforts as one man in the sternest opposition against them who are obviously doing that which the Lord has commanded men to do. Jesus himself encountered this very same kind of opposition. The Pharisees and the Herodians, who had no love for each other, did not hesitate to unite their forces in an effort to ensnare the Lord in his talk. (See Matt. 22: 15-22.) This same practice has also been continued since the beginning of the Restoration Movement. Let any person or group make a determined effort to speak where the Bible speaks, and to be silent where it is silent; and it will not be long until those in the area, regardless of their own differences, will bring their forces together and unite them as one man to render ineffective, if not completely destroy, the work which is being done to lead people back to the ancient order, as ordained of God.

But we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them. Jehovah wants his people to trust in him for protection, but that does not mean that he does not want them to use any or all of the means which his providence has put within their power for their self-preservation and defence. But those of us who profess to serve the Lord should always make sure that we employ only those things in defending ourselves which please him; for it is inconceivable that he would look with favor upon the use of means which do not come within the realm of his providence. "So then, my beloved, even as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure." (Phil. 2: 12, 13.) We should

learn to distinguish between the dispensations.

And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall. And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come into the midst of them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease. And it came to pass that, when the Jews that dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times from all places, Ye must return unto us. Therefore set I in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in the open places, I set there the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows. And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, who is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

After dealing with the conspiracy of the enemy and calling upon God to help the Jews, Nehemiah faced another difficult situation—this time from his own people. It seems that some from the tribe of Judah represented the laborers as being exhausted with their burdens; and with the magnitude of the task still before them, the removal of the rubbish, etc., they apparently suggested that they felt that it was wise to abandon the undertaking. And then on top of that, they began to bring to Nehemiah the reports from the conspirators. Matthew Henry thinks that the Jews who were dwelling by the enemy did not have enough zeal to go to Jerusalem and help their brethren build the wall; but, having learned of the plots of their foes, they did have enough honesty to report the matter to Nehemiah. However, he goes on to say, "the intelligence they gave is expressed abruptly, and finds work for the critics to make out the sense of it; which perhaps is designed to intimate that they gave this intelligence as men out of breath and in confusion, whose very looks would make up the deficiencies of their words." Moffatt renders verses 11, 12 in these words: "Our enemies said, 'They will hear and see nothing till we are in among them and slay them, and so stop the work.' And when the Jews who

lived beside our enemies came in, they kept telling us, 'They are gathering against us from all quarters.'

When this information was received by Nehemiah, he immediately adopted the most energetic measures for providing for the common safety of the people, as well as for the continuance of the work. Verses 13, 14 are expressed by Moffatt in these words, "The foe placed themselves in the low ground behind the wall, at the breaches; but I posted the people by companies, armed with sword and spear and bow. As I saw that they were afraid, I rose and addressed the authorities and the deputies and the rest of the people: 'Have no fear of them, remember the Lord, who is great and terrible, and fight for your kinsfolk, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.' " The word "terrible" is from the same Hebrew word (*yare*) as "reverend" in Psalm 111: 9; and it is used in the same grammatical construction—"Holy and reverend;" "great and terrible."

The Trust and Precaution of the Builders

(Neh. 4: 15-18)

And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work. Although Nehemiah was himself on the alert, and was quick to size up and meet the situation, it should be observed to his credit that he never failed to give credit to the overruling providence of God. That, in fact, accounts for the great courage and influence which he displayed and exerted. It also appears that the people all returned to their work in a better spirit. Opposition from without often serves to bring those within closer together, and changes their outlook regarding their work. This principle was often seen at work during the days of the early church, and it is still seen today. The enemies of Nehemiah and his people evidently saw that the "surprise element" of their scheme had been removed; and since that was intended as their chief stratagem, they recognized the futility of further efforts along that line, and apparently withdrew for the time being.

And it came to pass from that time forth, that half of my servants wrought in the work, and half of them held the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the coats of mail; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah. They that builded the wall and they that bare burdens laded themselves; every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other held his weapon; and the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me.

In order that this lesson may be of profit to us, let us notice the striking parallel between the work of Nehemiah and his people, and that of our day. 1. *The work of Nehemiah and his associates was not a pioneer undertaking.* There had been walls around Jerusalem before, which had been torn down; and it was their business simply to rebuild them. 2. *They were not able to give their undivided attention to the work.* It is true that the Chaldeans who had destroyed the walls were gone; but new local enemies and critics appeared who either did not believe that the walls could be rebuilt, or who did not want them rebuilt. Nehemiah and those with him, accordingly, had to do their work with divided attention. Building the walls therefore was a matter of doing two things at the same time—fighting off trouble with one hand, and laying stones with the other.

1. *The work before us today is largely one of restoration.* The church which the Lord established and made holy by his blood (Matt. 16: 18; Acts 20: 28; Eph. 5: 25-27) was a work which should have continued unchanged by the hands of men; but before it had gone very far, sin entered in and all but wrecked it. (See Acts 20: 28-30; 2 Thess. 2: 1-4.) It became necessary therefore for people who love the Lord and his church to devote themselves to the task of restoring it to its original purity and faithfulness in both doctrine and practice. No one who is acquainted with the facts in the case will contend that the work has been entirely finished; although, in the main, the task has been accomplished. 2. *Those who are engaged in the work of restoration are not permitted to give their undivided attention to the*

task in hand. There are both opposers and conspirators who are continuously hindering the work; and, unfortunately, they are inside the body as well as outside of it. Faithful Christians therefore must spend their time both in preaching the truth and in dealing with the critics who are hindering the progress of the work.

The opposition to the work of Nehemiah and his people took on three distinct forms, namely (1) ridicule and contempt, Neh. 4: 1-3; (2) attempt at open combat, Neh. 4:

7-11; and (3) treachery and infamous deceit, Neh. 6: 1-13. It is a well known fact, as just suggested, that those who seek to restore the ancient order of things meet with precisely the same types of opposition; and they must therefore, to a large extent, do their work with a divided mind. However, this should not be too discouraging to them, for God, too, has an enemy; and before the work of restoration and redemption is completed, the devil and his works must be destroyed. (Cf. 1 John 3: 8b; Eph. 6: 10ff; James 4: 7.)

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for our lesson today?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Who was Nehemiah and under what circumstances did he go to Jerusalem?

How did he learn about the conditions there?

How did he go about obtaining permission from the king for the proposed undertaking?

What was the first thing that Nehemiah did after reaching Jerusalem?

What was his strategy in announcing his plans for rebuilding the walls of the city?

What opposition did he almost immediately encounter?

What was his attitude toward his opposers?

The Secret of Nehemiah's Success

What was the secret of Nehemiah's success? Give reasons for your answer.

What contribution did the people make so far as their attitude was concerned?

What place did prayer have in their program?

What lessons should church leaders learn from Nehemiah's example?

Why does the work of the church so often go uncompleted?

What do you think could be done to encourage more elders to plan their work?

Conspiracy Defeated by Prayer and Diligence

What effect did the work of Nehemiah and his brethren have on their enemies?

Why were their foes so opposed to rebuilding the walls?

What conspiracy did they form?

Show that the same principle operates in our day.

Why do people of various religious bodies register such opposition to the church of the New Testament?

How did Nehemiah meet the threat of the conspiracy?

What does the Lord expect of his people when danger threatens them?

What means should they employ in defending themselves?

What is meant by saying that God works in his people "both to will and to work, for his good pleasure"?

What further trouble did Nehemiah encounter following the conspiracy?

Describe that which was done by the people of Judah.

What plans did Nehemiah make in order to meet this emergency?

How did he impress upon the people God's ability to care for them?

The Trust and Precaution of the Builders

In what way did Nehemiah show his faith in the providence of God?

Why did the enemies apparently withdraw from the scene at this time?

What parallels are seen between Nehemiah's work and ours today?

Discuss the opposition as a whole which Nehemiah had to meet?

Show that the same type of opposition must be met by the Lord's people today.

What encouraging factor do we see in this?

SECOND QUARTER

STUDIES IN ROMANS AND GALATIANS

AIM.—To study in detail Paul's great letters to the Romans and Galatians, and especially to consider his thesis of freedom in Christ versus bondage under the law of Moses.

Lesson I—April 7, 1963

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

Lesson Text

Rom. 1: 1-15

1 Paul, a servant of Je'-sus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

2 Which he promised afore through his prophets in the holy scriptures,

3 Concerning his Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh,

4 Who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead; *even* Je'-sus Christ our Lord,

5 Through whom we received grace and apostleship, unto obedience of faith among all the nations, for his name's sake;

6 Among whom are ye also, called to be Je'-sus Christ's:

7 To all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Je'-sus Christ.

8 First, I thank my God through Je'-sus Christ for you all, that your faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world.

9 For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of his Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers

10 Making request, if by any means now at length I may be prospered by the will of God to come unto you.

11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

12 That is, that I with you may be comforted in you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.

13 And I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you (and was hindered hitherto), that I might have some fruit in you also, even as in the rest of the Gen'-tiles.

14 I am debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.

15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome.

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rom. 1: 16, 17.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*But the righteous shall live by faith.*” (Rom. 1: 17.)

Daily Bible Readings

April 1. M.	Occasion for Paul's Trip to Rome (Acts 25: 1-10)
April 2. T.	Paul Appeals to Caesar (Acts 25: 11-22)
April 3. W.	Voyage to Rome (Acts 28: 11-16)
April 4. T.	Paul's Sojourn in Rome (Acts 28: 19-22)
April 5. F.	Paul's Associates in Rome (Rom. 16: 3-6)
April 6. S.	Paul's Interest in Roman Brethren (Rom. 16: 8-16)
April 7. S.	Prayers for Paul in Rome (Rom. 15: 30-33)

TIME.—A.D. 58 (the time of writing).

PLACE.—Romans was written from Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Roman Christians.

Introduction

One of the great problems which faced Paul during much of his time as a gospel preacher was that of

Judaism; and the four epistles which we are to study during this and the succeeding quarters of this year tell

us something of his method of dealing with the troublesome question. If we were to consider the subject simply from the standpoint of its history, so far as these four epistles are concerned, we would begin with Paul's correspondence with the Corinthian brethren, which was started during his long stay in Ephesus and finished somewhere in Macedonia, probably in Philippi, or possibly in Thessalonica or Beroea, during his third missionary journey. However, we should keep in mind the fact that Judaizers had been signally defeated at the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15) before Paul began his second journey. It was probably when the apostle reached Corinth, on his third journey, to crush the last remains of Judaism there, that the news of a crisis in Galatia reached him; and it appears that he almost immediately wrote the letter to the Galatians. Later on, probably the next spring, he wrote Romans. (See the chronological notes in the Gospel Advocate series of commentaries.)

When Paul wrote his letter to the Romans, his work in the eastern world had been practically finished. (Rom. 15: 19-23.) He had been preaching the gospel in Asia Minor and Greece for approximately twenty-five years. His work began in Syria and Cilicia, and then reached out to include labors in Cyprus, Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and finally in Asia, which the Romans called the western-most province of Asia Minor. It is possible that Paul would have gone to Rome when he finished his work in the eastern part of the Roman Empire, had it not been for his commitment regarding the collection for the Jerusalem saints. (1 Cor. 16:

1-4; Rom. 15: 23-32.) But being compelled by this great benevolent undertaking to defer for the time being his proposed visit to Rome and Spain, Paul did the next best thing: he secured a letter-writer and dictated a long epistle to the brethren in the Imperial City.

Paul's letter to the Roman brethren is at once the least personal and the most elaborate of all of his writings which have come down to us. Perhaps his message should be called a treatise, rather than a letter. It has as much in common with a treatise as is consistent with the freedom and warmth of a real letter. But regardless of the subject in hand, Paul was always vividly personal, and was ever conscious of the people to whom he was writing, that is, he wanted them to understand his message to them. The Judaizing tendencies which had recently appeared in Corinth and Galatia were certain, eventually, to appear in other churches, perhaps ultimately in all; and the attitude assumed by a church already so influential, and which was destined to increase in power, as the Roman church was, would be certain to carry great weight in deciding the controversy. Therefore, to set the church in Rome right regarding the design and nature of the gospel was a work of supreme importance; and a letter from the apostle to the church in the Capital City on the question of the hour would be read with interest and profit, not only by that church, but eventually by the entire brotherhood. Such, in brief, was the background against which Paul wrote the epistle, the study of which we are now beginning.

The Golden Text

"But *the righteous shall live by faith.*" This is a quotation which Paul made from Habakkuk. (2: 4; cf. Gal. 3: 11; Heb. 10: 37, 38.) The goal of religion, as Paul viewed the question, was uprightness of character and a state of reconciliation and acceptance with God. He did not, however, lose sight of the fact that this world in which men live is one of monstrous and degrading wickedness, brutal and violent without, and envious, treacherous, and malicious within. The pagan world had turned away from God, and had descended

to the corruptions of idolatrous worship; and God, in turn, had abandoned them to the gross and vicious life which they had chosen. The Jewish world, on the other hand, was no better. It was obstinate and impenitent, and did not hesitate to pronounce the rest of mankind sinners, even while disobeying the law itself. But its pose of superior piety and its pride in its privileged relation to God did not prevent it from falling, like the Gentiles, under the control of sin.

Jews and Gentiles alike therefore

were in the direst need of salvation, but with no visible means of attaining it; neither the law of Moses nor human wisdom had been able to secure it. God, however, through Christ revealed a way of becoming righteous in his sight, namely, the way of faith; and it is open to Jews and Gentiles alike. The faith by which one becomes righteous, and therefore acceptable to God, is not merely intellectual assent to this or that truth or proposition, but a relationship of trustful and obedient dependence upon God, such as Abraham exemplified when he walked before God. This relationship is fully revealed through Christ, having been confirmed and illuminated by his death. Those who adopt this attitude of faith are freed from sin and from the tyranny of the law. And because they are sons, the Holy Spirit is given to them, and through him the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts.⁶

It has already been pointed out that the term "faith," as used by Paul, does not mean mere intellectual belief or assent, although that, of course, is implied. The predominant idea in the word, as Paul used it, is trust in God, or the giving over of oneself to him. Faith in this sense stands in direct opposition to meritorious works; but it is never placed in contrast with works which are produced by faith. The latter works are referred to as "obedience of faith," and by them faith is made perfect. (See James 2: 22; cf. Rom. 3: 27—"a law of faith.") The *law of faith* just referred to is the divine arrangements for saving the lost, or which is the same thing, the gospel plan of salvation. The term "law" is frequently used to denote the whole legal system; and inasmuch as "faith" is the leading and characteristic feature of the religion of Christ, it is often used to denote the whole of Christianity.

The Text Explained

The Salutation (Rom. 1: 1-7)

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, which he promised afore through his prophets in the holy scriptures, concerning his Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead; even Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we received grace and apostleship, unto obedience of faith among all the nations, for his name's sake; among whom are ye also, called to be Jesus Christ's: to all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the longest salutation found in any of the epistles; and, as one may see by reading it, it is expressed in a single sentence. (Cf. the salutations of Titus and Galatians for those nearest to Romans in point of length.) In the salutation now before us we have (1) a description of the writer, (2) a word about his gospel and apostleship, (3) something concerning the readers; and (4) the greeting. The expansion of the salutation was

natural, since he was addressing a most important document to a church with whom he was not personally acquainted.

The three things Paul said about himself are (1) he was a servant of Jesus Christ, (2) he was called to be an apostle, and (3) he was separated unto the gospel of God. The marginal reading for "servant" is *bondservant*, which ordinarily signifies a slave; but James Mac-knight points out that "here it is a name of honor; for in the East the chief ministers of kings were called *douloi* (slaves). . . . This honorable name, therefore, denotes the high authority which Paul possessed in the kingdom of Christ, as one of his chief ministers." In further describing his relation to Christ, he informed the Roman brethren that he was "a called apostle," a *klētos* apostle, which, so far as the New Testament meaning of the word is concerned, always denotes that God did the calling. (Cf. Rom. 8: 28; Jude 1.) His "separation," that is, his being set apart or appointed as a gospel preacher, was also an act of God. (Cf. Gal. 1: 15.) All of this meant that he was speaking for God when he addressed his message to the Romans.

Paul then went on to show that the gospel which he preached was the result of the promise which God had made through the Old Testament prophets (Luke 24: 44-46; 1 Cor. 15: 1-4), and that its subject is his own Son, who was both human and divine. His genealogy showed him to be the son of David, while his resurrection from the dead declared him to be God's Son; for if he had not been God's Son, as he claimed to be, God would not have raised him from the dead. And it was from this Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, that Paul received his commission—grace and apostleship—to preach the gospel to the Gentiles; and it was for that reason that his work in that field was not of his own choosing, the Judaizers to the contrary, notwithstanding. (Cf. Gal. 2: 7-9; 1 Cor. 15: 10; Eph. 3: 7, 8.)

Paul is the most exhaustive writer of the New Testament on the subject of justification by faith; and his most elaborate treatise on that question is found in the letter we are now studying. In view of the emphasis he placed on the subject, and the clarity with which he dealt with the issue, it is interesting to observe that he opened and closed the epistle with the expression "obedience of faith." (See Rom. 1: 5; 16: 26.) The marginal reading in both of these instances is obedience "to the faith." The rendering in the Revised Standard Version is "to bring about obedience to the faith," while the New English Bible has "to lead to faith and obedience." This teaching, of course, makes impossible the idea of salvation by faith only. "Faith" and "obedience of faith" are not the same. The *obedience of faith* is the obedience which results from faith, or which faith produces. The gospel, according to Paul, was made known for this very purpose. (Cf. 2 Thess. 1: 8; 1 Pet. 4: 17.) Paul made it plain to the Roman brethren that they were among the number of Gentiles who were the "called" (*klētoi*) of Jesus Christ.

Some Personal Explanations (Rom. 1: 8-12)

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world. For God is my witness,

whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of his Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers making request, if by any means now at length I may be prospered by the will of God to come unto you. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I with you may be comforted in you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.

Before beginning the discussion of the great theme of justification by faith, in contrast with the meritorious works of the law, Paul wanted to bring about an intimate relationship with the Roman brethren; and he sought to do just that by some personal explanations, the first of which was his thankfulness for what they were in relationship to Jesus Christ. They not only accepted Christ as their Saviour, but their faith had grown to the extent that it was proclaimed, that is, made known, throughout the entire world. Few things meant more to the grand old apostle to the Gentiles than a church which exerted such godly influence. His own work with the church in Ephesus had been such "that all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks." (See Acts 19: 8-10; cf. 1 Thess. 1: 2-10.) Not only is thankfulness the natural manifestation of a thoughtful person; it is indispensable to the best in human relations. The words "thank" and "think" are from the same Anglo-Saxon root, and their spelling differs only in a single letter. Thoughtful people are those who are thankful; and those who are thankful are the thoughtful ones. Paul wanted the brethren in Rome to react favorably to his message to them; and he knew that one of the best ways to that end was to establish a congenial relationship between them. And what could be better than to let them know of his gratitude for their faithfulness? This is a lesson that church leaders, preachers, and all other Christians should learn well and put into practice at all times.

Paul's interest in the Roman brethren had to be made known to them without his personal presence; and it was for that reason that he assured them that God was his witness in this respect. Only God could

know the true state of his heart, which was always in his service; and so, under the most solemn circumstances, he let them know of his interest in them and his desire to visit them. He had, however, long since learned that all of his movements were subject to the will of God. (Acts 16: 6-8; cf. 1 Cor. 4: 19; Rom. 15: 30-32; James 4: 13-17.) Paul's longing to visit the Roman Christians was not motivated simply by a desire to see the Imperial City; his one aim was their mutual benefit, "each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine." This should be the attitude and aim of every gospel preacher and every congregation of Christians, when their efforts are united in the service of the Lord.

Paul's Sense of Human Responsibility (Rom. V. 13-15)

And I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you (and was hindered hitherto), that I might have some fruit in you also, even as in the rest of the Gentiles. I am debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome.

In speaking of his oft-purposed visit to the Roman brethren, Paul may have been thinking of the reaction of the Corinthians to a similar situation. These latter brethren even went far enough to question the apostle's sincerity regarding the proposed visit. (See 1 Cor. 16: 5-9; 2 Cor. 1: 15-24.) We do not know, of course, all the things which kept the apostle from going to Rome, but he himself told the brethren that his preaching obligations in the East had been a hindrance "many times" (see Rom. 15: 20-23); and he also implied that the journey to Jerusalem with the collection for the poor of that region also stood in the way of an early trip to their city (Rom. 15: 24-28). Paul's preaching was mainly to the Gentiles, and it was his desire to have fruit to offer to God wherever it was possible for him to labor, and that he hoped would include Rome. "But I write the more boldly unto you in some measure, as putting you again in remembrance, because of the grace that was given me of God, that I should be a minister of

Christ Jesus unto the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit." (Rom. 15: 15, 16.)

Paul's remark about his obligation toward all men of every race and condition opens up to us in some measure the secret of his tireless missionary zeal. His own salvation from eternal destruction and his commission to preach the gospel made him a debtor to all men. "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. 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. 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. For though I was free from all men, I brought myself under bondage to all, that I might gain the more. And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, not being myself under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, not being without law to God, but under law to Christ, that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak: I am become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And I do all things for the gospel's sake, that I may be a joint partaker thereof." (1 Cor. 9: 16-23.)

Notwithstanding the fact that Paul had suffered many things of the people of his day, he still felt himself under a deep obligation to all of them; and it was this feeling which "explains the tireless energy, the unbounded devotion, the unquenchable ardour which drove him from one land and city to another, preaching to all and sundry the 'unsearchable riches of Christ.' And when we have penetrated behind the outer form and husk of this saying to its inner meaning we shall find not only the key to the life of St. Paul, the missionary, but the master-motive of all true missionary effort in every age and land." (The Speaker's Bible—Romans, Vol. I, p. 25.)

The Greeks were the "cultured"

people of Paul's day, while the Barbarians were foreigners, or those who did not speak the Greek language; and, so far as the Jews were concerned, "Greeks and Barbarians" included all who were not of the favored family of Abraham, through Isaac and Jacob. But regardless of their race, state, or condition, Paul felt that he was under obligation to

preach the gospel to them; and that was what he wanted the brethren in Rome to understand. That, however, was entirely unacceptable to the Judaizers who so bitterly opposed Paul; but his aim was to please God and save souls, and not be turned aside from the right course by the zealous, but misguided, men of his own race.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today's lesson?
Repeat the golden text.
Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What great problem faced Paul most of the time during his preaching career?
What is meant by "Judaism"?
Tell something of its history as it relates to the four epistles we are to study during the remainder of this year.
Under what circumstances did Paul come to write Romans?
How does this letter compare with his other epistles?
Why did he write such an elaborate letter to those brethren?

The Golden Text

As Paul viewed the matter, what is the goal of all true religion?
What was the general condition of the world, morally speaking, when he wrote Romans?
What plan did God formulate for the salvation of the race?
What is meant by saying that the just shall live by faith?
What is meant by the "way of faith"?
How, then, are people saved by faith?
What use did Paul make of the terms "law" and "faith" in his letter to the Romans?

The Salutation

What can you say of the length and contents of this salutation?
What three things did Paul affirm of himself?
What was, probably implied in his use of the term "servant"?
What kind of an apostle did he say that he was?
In what way did he speak of his "separation"?
Why did he say all of these things about himself?
In what way is the gospel related to the Old Testament?
What does Paul say in the salutation regarding Jesus?

What showed him to be the son of David?
In what way was Jesus declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead?
What did Paul say about his commission to preach the gospel as an apostle of Christ?
What "safeguard" did he add to his discussion of the question of salvation by faith?
What is the meaning of "obedience of faith"?
What is the difference between "faith" and "obedience of faith"?
What did Paul say about the "call" of the Roman brethren?
What appears to have been the nationality of many of them?

Some Personal Explanations

What was Paul apparently seeking to do in this section of our lesson?
Why was he so thankful for these brethren?
Why is the expression of thankfulness so essential in the best of human relations?
Why, then, did Paul tell the Roman brethren that he thanked God for their faith?
What lesson should we all learn from this?
Why did Paul say that God was his witness regarding his interest in the Roman brethren?
What was his attitude toward the will of God?
What lesson is there in this for us?
Why did Paul want to visit the Roman Christians?

Paul's Sense of Human Responsibility

What did Paul want the Roman brethren to know regarding his desire to see them?
What had prevented an earlier visit to Rome?
What fruit was he seeking in them?
Why did Paul feel obligated to all men.
Who were the "Greeks and the "Barbarians"?

⊙

The future destiny of the child is always the work of the mother.

—Napoleon.

All that I am, or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother. —Lincoln

Lesson II—April 14, 1963

JUSTIFIED BY GRACE

Lesson Text

Rom. 3: 19-31

19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it speaketh to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be brought under the judgment of God:

20 Because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for through the law cometh the knowledge of sin.

21 But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

22 Even the righteousness of God through faith in Je-sus Christ unto all them that believe; for there is no distinction;

23 For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God;

24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Je'-sus:

25 Whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his

blood, to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God;

26 For the showing, I say, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Je'-sus.

27 Where then is the glorying? It is excluded. By what manner of law? of works? Nay: but by a law of faith.

28 We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

29 Or is God *the God* of Jews only? is he not *the God* of Gen'-tiles also? Yea, of Gen'-tiles also:

30 If so be that God is one, and he shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith.

31 Do we then make the law of none effect through faith? God forbid: nay, we establish the law.

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rom. 3: 1-18.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*By grace have ye been saved.*” (Eph. 2: 5.)

Daily Bible Readings

April 8. M.....	Paul's Desire to Preach to the Romans (Rom. 1: 13-17)
April 9. T.....	Wickedness of the Gentile World (Rom. 1: 18-25)
April 10. W.....	Description of Gentile Ungodliness (Rom. 1: 28-32)
April 11. T.....	Jew and Gentile Alike (Rom. 2: 1-12)
April 12. F.....	God's Name Blasphemed by Ungodly Conduct (Rom. 2: 17-24)
April 13. S.....	True Jew in God's Sight Today (Rom. 2: 25-29)
April 14. S.....	Justified by Grace (Eph. 2: 1-8)

TIME.—A.D. 58.

PLACE.—Romans was written from Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Roman Christians.

Introduction

Grace is unmerited favor, a benefit bestowed upon one who does not deserve it. Such a blessing is always given without compensation, and there is nothing which the one needing the favor can do to merit it. (Cf. Rom. 4: 4, 5.) If grace were an obligation on God's part, it would no longer be grace. All the recipients of God's grace are sinners, and as such they deserve to have God against them. God demonstrated his animosity to sin by the cross; but instead of send-

ing a judge or a destroyer to obliterate the offenders, he came in the person of his Son to offer them full and complete salvation. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 18-21.) The supreme sacrifice on the part of Christ makes it impossible for one to think of grace as divine indulgence; or, to express the same thing in other words, grace does not imply the weak and careless forgiveness of sins; for pardon could be effected only by the death of the innocent—the voluntary sacrifice of him who

knew no sin. Grace, then, means God's coming to man and providing a way whereby man can return to God; all of which would have been impossible if Christ had not satisfied the holiness of God and the demands of divine justice by dying in the sinner's stead.

Our lesson for today is concerned primarily with the grace of God, which indicates a favorable disposition on his part and is a manifestation of that quality of his nature which is the source of the undeserved blessings which have to do with salvation from sin. There are variations in the Bible from this central meaning of the term grace, but they are not a part of our study at this time. However, there are two closely-related shades of the general idea of grace which should be emphasized at the beginning of our study, namely,

(1) the gospel as opposed to the law of Moses (John 1: 17; Rom. 6: 14;

1 Pet. 5: 12); and (2) God's forgiving mercy, as gratuitous and opposed to merit (Rom. 11: 6; Eph. 2: 5; Col. 1: 6).

As the lesson is applied to us, the sinner needs a blessing which he cannot secure for himself. He needs the forgiveness of his sins and to be regarded as righteous before God; but the New Testament clearly shows that it is only through God's grace that it is possible for the sinner to have these benefits. It does not make any difference how many things may be required of the sinner by way of "obedience of faith," it always remains true that such acts of obedience do not earn or merit salvation; they are simply works which make faith perfect. (Cf. James 2: 22.) Nothing which any one can do will destroy the fact that forgiveness, or a state of righteousness, is a benefit which is bestowed upon the sinner by the grace of God. (See Tit. 3: 5.)

The Golden Text

"By grace have ye been saved."

This text is a parenthetical statement which is found in Paul's letter to some Christians who had experienced God's grace in their own lives. (Read Eph. 2: 1-10.) The paragraph just referred to is a part of Paul's argument regarding the manner in which God's redemption was wrought and his people made one. (See Eph. 2: 1-22.) A fuller statement of salvation by grace is found in verses 8, 9:

"For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory." This passage clearly shows that there must always be a mutual response before salvation can be effected: God's response to the sinner's need, and the sinner's response to God's offer to save.

When it is affirmed that "by grace have ye been saved," the emphasis is on God's part: "it is the gift of God." Salvation is his gift to the sinner; and it was provided through his grace (*the grace*, in the original in verse 8), which is equivalent to the gospel. "For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world." (Tit. 2: 11, 12.) The quali-

fying phrase "through faith" in verse 8 should not be overlooked; for it is just as much a part of the text as is the portion with reference to grace. Salvation for the lost is provided and offered by God's grace; it is received and appropriated by man's faith, which shows that God's grace must be acknowledged for what it is and accepted by the one in need. This human decision, involving acknowledgment and acceptance, is the faith which corresponds to God's grace—"by grace have ye been saved through faith."

Paul makes it plain in the context of the passage now before us that this salvation which is bestowed by the grace of God is not the result of anything which the sinner did, or could do. "Not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory." In writing to Titus, the apostle expressed the same thought in these words: "Not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." (Tit. 3: 5.) Works as used in these passages refer to *meritorious works* or works which, in and of themselves, procure the desired end. Such works are in sharp contrast with works of obedience.

(Cf. James 2: 14-26.) Any one therefore who will study Paul's writings will learn that while he vigorously opposed the idea of justification based on meritorious works, he did not oppose, but instead positively taught, justification which is conditioned on

works that are produced by faith. Obedience which springs from faith is never by Paul, nor by any other New Testament writer, placed in contrast with faith; nor is such obedience ever represented as making faith void. (Cf. Rom. 4: 14.)

The Text Explained

me Moral Condition of All Men
before the Law
(Rom. 3: 19, 20)

Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it speaketh to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be brought under the judgment of God: because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for through the law cometh the knowledge of sin.

That which may be referred to as the "doctrinal portion" of Paul's letter to the Romans is from 1: 18 to 8: 39. Chapters 9-11 deal with the problem of the rejection of Israel; chapters 12 through 15: 13 contain some practical exhortations; and in 15: 14 through 16: 27 Paul includes some personal matters, such as explanations, greetings, and benedictions. With this analysis in mind, it should be noted that the verses which make up this section of our lesson constitute a summary of the discussion of 1: 18-3: 18, in which Paul demonstrated the sinfulness of all men, both the Gentiles and the Jews, and therefore the universal need of righteousness.

The Jews did not hesitate to condemn all Gentiles as gross sinners; and, so far as they, that is, the Jews, were concerned, they did not need any proof from Paul or anyone else, as for that matter, that they were justified in their condemnation of all men outside the realm of Judaism. And as long as they held that view, they were in no condition to admit their own need of the salvation which God had provided for the human race. The principle underlying all this is just as true now as it was then. Many people, even in the church, are so busy condemning others as to make it impossible for them to see their own need in the sight of God.

Paul wanted the Jews of his day to understand that they were responsible for the doing of that which the Old Testament Scriptures required

of them; and since he had just pointed out the fact that the Jews had consistently violated that which God had addressed to them, they were in just as great need as any Gentile. In speaking to the Jews, Paul said, "Wherefore thou art without excuse, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest dost practise the same things. And we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against them that practise such things. And reckonest thou this, O man, who judgest them that practise such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" (Rom. 2: 1-3; read also the remainder of chapter 2 and the first 18 verses of chapter 3.) The comparison which Paul was making in the verses just quoted was based on that which he had just said about the Gentiles in Rom. 1: 18-32.

The conclusion which Paul drew from the comparison of the conduct of the Jews with that of the Gentiles is that all the world may be brought under the judgment of God; and he impressed that truth upon the Jews by showing them that they had no defense whatsoever for their own disobedience. Their own law, prophets, and sweet singer of Israel had condemned them in no uncertain terms; and they could not deny that which they said: for "we know that what things soever the law [the term *law* is used here to include all the Old Testament] saith, it speaketh to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped," that is, remain silent in the presence of his accusers.

The apostle continues the summation of his arguments regarding the moral condition of both the Jews and the Gentiles by showing the impossibility of any person's being saved as a result of his keeping any law [there is no article before the word "law" in verse 20, and the term there-

fore includes both the law of Moses and any other law which the Gentiles might keep—cf. Rom. 2: 14, 15 J. The purpose of law is not to save (cf. Gal. 2: 21), but to give the knowledge of sin. Phillips renders the two verses of this section of our lesson in these words: "We know that the message of the law is, to those who live under it—that every excuse may die on the lips of him who makes it and no living man may think himself beyond the judgment of God. 'No man can justify himself before God' by a perfect performance of the law's demands—indeed it is the straightedge of the law that shows us how crooked we are." Law therefore served its purpose when it caused men to see how sinful they are; it can bring them down to this point, but it can never lift them up to God. This should be an impressive lesson to those professed followers of Christ who are apparently more concerned about keeping the *letter* of the law, than in fulfilling its spirit.

Righteousness through Faith, Apart
from Law, Man's only Hope
(Rom. 3: 21-26)

The fundamental thesis of the letter to the Romans was stated by Paul in these words: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith." (Rom. 1: 16, 17.) And then, after showing the universal need for righteousness in 1: 18-3: 20, Paul again returns to the theme of the epistle and shows what the righteousness of God is, which is revealed in the gospel. And it should be kept in mind throughout this study that the righteousness about which Paul is writing is a *revealed* righteousness, rather than one which comes as a result of legal rectitude. (Cf. Phil. 3: 7-9.)

The apostle begins this part of his argument by showing that the righteousness of God which is revealed in the gospel is apart from, that is, it is not based upon any legal system (there is no article used with the term "law" in the original); but he quickly adds that both the law of

Moses and the prophets gave their testimony concerning this new plan for saving the race. This was done by the many Messianic promises, types, shadows, and prophecies of the Old Testament; and if the Jews had understood their scriptures aright, they would have welcomed rather than resented this new order of things. (Cf. Acts 13: 27.) Ignorance of God's ways will never lead anyone to him. "Brethren, my heart's desire and my supplication to God is for them, that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God." (Rom. 10: 1-3.) And this principle is just as true now as it was then; all of which means that people who seek to please God should have as their first consideration the desire and the determination to learn and to do God's will, as it is revealed in his word. (Cf. John 7: 17; Matt. 13: 10-16.)

The righteousness which is revealed in the gospel is further described as "the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." Paul constantly holds forth the truth that people of this dispensation are saved, only when they accept by faith God's plan of redemption which was made possible by the death of Christ; for it is only when people believe the gospel that they are willing to obey that which it enjoins. Both Jew and Gentile had been under law, and both had signally failed to attain righteousness thereby; and this had made it necessary for a new plan to be offered. And since this new plan could be made possible only by the death of the righteous for the unrighteous, it was of necessity a system of grace; and it is opened to anyone who is willing to believe that which has been revealed concerning it. The kind of faith which is required in this connection is fully set forth in such passages as Rom. 4 and James 2: 14-26.

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth

to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood, to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; for the showing, I say, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus.

The word "justify" is a legal term and means to acquit or declare innocent; and, thus, all who have been redeemed by the vicarious sacrifice of Christ are counted as righteous before God, that is, acceptable to him. This is a bold metaphor, picturing God as a judge who acquits the prisoner. And this is done *freely*, inasmuch as only God can bestow such a blessing, and he is under no compulsion to do so; it is only out of the goodness of love of his own heart that any man is saved. *Grace*, as we have already seen, is unmerited favor, a benefit bestowed upon one who does not deserve it. The term "redemption" has reference to a releasing which is brought about by the payment of a ransom. As used by Paul and other New Testament writers, the term refers to the deliverance from the wrath of God and the deserved penalty of sin through the sacrificial death of Christ. (Cf. Eph. 1: 7; 1 Cor. 7: 23; 1 Pet. 1: 18, 19.) The sinner is a bondservant of Satan, and must be redeemed from his power. (See Col. 1: 13; Rom. 6: 16-18.) This metaphor represents God as the benefactor who purchases freedom for the slave.

To *propitiate* is to appease or render favorable; and this, of course, presupposes an offense which makes the offended ill-disposed toward the offender. Thus, to propitiate the offended is to do something which will placate him, and thereby gain his good will; and the propitiation is the means by which this is done, that is, the offering, action, or sacrifice which makes the offended favorable disposed toward the offender. As Paul uses the term in the passage now before us, Jesus was the propitiation which made it possible for God to be righteous while passing over, that is, not fully dealing with, the sins committed before the coming of Christ, and in justifying those who have faith in his Son. This is Paul's third metaphor, and in it he compares God with a priest who makes

sacrifice for the purpose of securing the forgiveness of sin.

All men have sinned, and as a result they are not what God would have them be—they do not live as he intended that they should. This condition has put a barrier between God and men; and they, in and of themselves, cannot overcome it, no matter how hard they may try. But what men could not do for themselves, God has done for them by sending his Son, and through him making a way for them to return to the Father. (Cf. John 14: 6.) When this plan is accepted by the sinner by faith, the total result is salvation by grace.

The Principle of Faith versus Legal Achievement (Rom. 3: 27-31)

Where then is the glorying? It is excluded. By what manner of law? of works? Nay: but by a law of faith. We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the work of the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yea, of Gentiles also: if so be that God is one, and he shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith.

Do we then make the law of none effect through faith? God forbid: nay, we establish the law.

The term "law" in this section of our lesson for today does not refer to the law of Moses, as such, but to any law, probably more accurately to the principle of law, such as Jehovah recognized for both Jews and Gentiles. Moffatt renders verse 27 in these words: "Then what becomes of our boasting? It is ruled out absolutely. On what principle? On the principle of doing deeds? No, on the principle of faith." See also Lipscomb's comments, *in loco*. Whiteside notes that "the greatest ground for humility is the knowledge that an innocent person died to save me from my own folly. Instead of being the proud possessor of a spotless character, I have to rely on another to cleanse me from my own defilement. And this depending on the innocent to justify the guilty is what Paul calls the 'law of faith.' This law of faith is the plan, or arrangement, in which is required faith in Jesus, who died for us."

The contrast, then, is between believing and achieving, as Moser points out—"Christ *achieves* and man *receives* justification;" or, as Phillips translates the passage, "What happens now to human pride of achievement? There is no more room for it. Why, because failure to keep the law has killed it? Not at all, but because the whole matter is now on a different plane—believing instead of achieving. We see now that a man is justified before God by the fact of his faith in God's appointed Savior and not by what he has managed to achieve under the law."

The concise manner in which Paul asks the questions of verse 29 is significant; and the only way to evade the conclusion he draws, as James Denney points out, "would be to suppose—as is here presented by way of alternative—that God is a God of Jews only. But the supposition is

impossible: there is only one God, and therefore he must be God of all, of Gentiles and Jews alike. This is assumed as an axiom by the apostle." And on the difference between "by faith" and "through faith" in verse 30, if indeed there is a difference, Vincent quotes Wordsworth as saying, "The Jews are justified out of (*ek*) the faith which their father Abraham had, and which they are supposed to have in him. The Gentiles must enter that door and pass *through* it in order to be justified." (Cf. Eph. 2: 17.) Verse 31 is spoken from the viewpoint of the Jewish objector, but Paul assures him that the law is set upon a secure footing; and, for the first time, comes into its own place. This is clearly seen in chapters 6-8 where the life of the Christian is unfolded, and we are shown that *the just demands of the law* are fulfilled in believers, and in believers only.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?
Repeat the golden text.
Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What is grace? and what can you say of its greatness?
Show how grace is related to our salvation.

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances did Paul write the words of this text?
What is the relation between grace and faith in the matter of salvation?
In what sense is our salvation "not of works"?
What is the difference between "works" in this sense and "obedience of faith"?

The Moral Condition of All Men before the Law

Give a brief analysis of the Book of Romans, and show why this is helpful in our study.
What was the attitude of the Jews with reference to their own state and that of others?
What did Paul do in order to make them realize their need of salvation?
What law did the apostle say that spoke to the Jews?
What was the primary purpose of law in the economy of God?
What important lesson should we learn from this?

Righteousness through Faith, Apart from Law, Man's only Hope

What is the fundamental thesis of the letter to the Romans?

In what way is this section of our lesson related to it?

What kind of righteousness was Paul writing about?

In what way did the Old Testament Scriptures bear witness to it?

Why didn't the Jews accept this revealed righteousness?

What application does this principle have for our day?

In what way did Paul show that this righteousness was intended for all men?

Why is faith so essential in the gospel plan of salvation?

In what sense is the entire system called "faith"?

What is the meaning of the term "justify"?

Why say that justification was *freely* bestowed?

Discuss the terms "redemption" and "propitiation" as Paul used them.

The Principle of Faith versus Legal Achievement

In what sense did Paul use the term "law" in this section of our lesson?

What is the greatest antidote to glorying over one's salvation?

What is the great contrast which Paul is discussing in this part of our lesson?

What concise method did he employ in showing that God is no respecter of persons?

In what sense were the Jews justified "by faith" and the Gentiles "through faith"?

What does Paul mean by saying that God's plan of salvation establishes law?

Show from the apostle's writings how this was done.

Lesson III—April 21, 1963

JUSTIFIED BY CHRIST'S BLOOD

Lesson Text

Rom. 5: 8-17

8 But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him.

10 For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life;

11 And not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Je'-sus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

12 Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned:—

13 For until the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Mo'-ses, even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is a figure of him that was to come.

15 But not as the trespass, so also is the free gift. For if by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the one man, Je'-sus Christ, abound unto the many.

16 And not as through one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment came of one unto condemnation, but the free gift came of many trespasses unto justification.

17 For if, by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one; much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, even Je'-sus Christ.

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rom. 5: 1-7.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"For while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly."* (Rom. 5: 6.)

Daily Bible Readings

- April 15. M.....Redemption Through Christ's Blood (Eph. 1: 1-7)
- April 16. T.....Forgiveness Through Christ's Blood (Col. 1: 1-14)
- April 17. W.....No Forgiveness without Shedding of Blood (Heb. 10: 1-18)
- April 18. Th.....Propitiation through Christ's Blood (1 John 2: 1-6)
- April 19. F.....Christ Put Away Sin by Shedding His Blood (Heb. 9: 24-28)
- April 20. S.....Baptized into the Death of Christ (Rom. 6: 1-6)
- April 21. Sa.....Blood Shed in His Death (John 19: 31-37)

TIME.—A.D. 58.

PLACE.—Romans was written from Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Roman Christians.

Introduction

In the First Epistle of John, we read this significant statement: "If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1: 6, 7.) This is an all-inclusive affirmation, and it admits of no exception: the blood of Christ, and the blood of Christ alone, cleanses from

sin. Or to state the same thing in other words, there is no substitute for the blood of Christ, when it comes to the forgiveness of sin. This truth is stated over and over in the New Testament. (Cf. Eph. 1: 7; Heb. 9: 11-17; Rev. 1: 5.) Peter adds his testimony to this great truth in these words: "Knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood,

as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ." (1 Pet. 1: 18, 19.)

We are not to understand, of course, that the literal blood of Christ is applied to the sinner in cleansing him from sin; that is not the meaning of the expression "the blood of Christ" as used in the passages just cited, or indeed anywhere else in its application to the subject of forgiveness. Jehovah made it plain to Noah and his family, after they came forth from the ark, that the life of flesh, including that of man, is the blood thereof (Gen. 9: 4-6; cf. Lev. 17: 10-16); and so, when the Bible speaks of the shedding of blood, as in the case of the death of Christ, the meaning is that his life was taken from him (Acts 8: 33). Therefore, when the New Testament declares that the blood of Christ cleanses from sin, the meaning is that his life which was given for that purpose—the vicarious death—enables God to forgive every sinner who will accept the divine offer of salvation. (See Rom. 3: 24-26.)

There is something definite about the term "blood," and, as *The Speaker's Bible* points out, "it is susceptible of no glosses, or disguises, aliases. All the world over it has but one meaning. You can take the word *love* and you can dilute it away into affection, and away a little farther into *regard*, and still farther away into *esteem*, until it becomes a sort

of moonlight quality, with all the original warmth and glow gone out of it. Esteem puts no tender hand under the aching head. Esteem helps no poor man up the hill. Esteem binds up no broken heart, and kindles no fire on the hearth that has gone out. It is too cold. So you can shade the word *truth* away through various synonyms such as *candour*, *frankness*, *varacity*, and the like, until it begins to mix with falsehood as day merges into night. But take the word *blood*, and see what you can make of it. As a matter of fact, you cannot soften or disguise it or clothe it in some other dress, or find for it some more genteel equivalent. No matter how dainty you may be in the use of language, if you want to speak of blood at all you have got to say *blood*, for the dictionary will not accommodate you with any synonyms. The word *blood* stands alone, and, as another has said, 'is too simple, too energetic, too solemn to take upon it the faintest gloss of the most reluctant expositor. Its unquenchable ardour burns through the snow which you scatter upon its summit. No winter can loiter upon those ardent slopes.' The word melts through and stands out in all its own naked and rugged strength. It is immensely significant. God has ordained that that upon which the salvation of mankind depends shall not be trifled with or disguised or softened away into something else." (Eph. p. 32.)

The Golden Text

For while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly. This and the two following verses constitute Paul's statement of the fact and purpose of the death of Christ, similar to that found in John 3: 16. The three verses together read as follows: "For while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: for peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die. But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." As we look at this from the standpoint of the world, the cross of Christ was a singular example of bad strategy; for it is obvious from the record of the last few days of his life that most any-

one could see what was going to happen to him. When once he came into the midst of his enemies, his downfall was engineered with speed and ease; and in his death he lost all the distinction he once enjoyed as a popular teacher and healer of the people.

It is not to be supposed, however, that Jesus blundered into this situation; for he had predicted, long before his death, just exactly what was going to happen, and he went forward to meet the situation in his own frustrating manner. He did not manage his affairs as he did because he was a bad strategist, but because he well knew that there was no strategy which would bring about the recognition of his true self. He did not follow any of the ways of the

world; for he knew that none of them would serve his purpose. He was neither blind nor deaf to that which was going on about him; and he knew that the rumblings which he heard could mean nothing less than his own death.

But Jesus saw in the midst of those rumblings the naked fact of human sinfulness and because wickedness was everywhere to be found, he did not, like a mere timeserver, try to build his cause upon anything he saw in man. But, knowing that sin everywhere abounded, he followed the only course which was open to him—namely, the righteous must die for the ungodly. That was the only way that sinful men could be brought back to God; and mere strategy could

do nothing in that direction. God's love for man and his desire for his salvation is so great, that nothing less than the death of his beloved Son could manifest his feeling to the human race. And so, he lit his torch where the night was the blackest, and set up his standard where things were at their worst; and ordained that they should be kept aloft as long as time continues. What would have been our plight had God not loved us while we were in sin, and if Jesus had been a mere strategist! "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out!" (Rom. 11: 33.)

The Text Explained

The Basis for Man's Reconciliation with God (Rom. 5: 8)

But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. This verse might very properly be called the argument of God's own love for his lost people. (Cf. Isa. 1: 18.) In it we are brought face to face with the cross of Christ, and we are able to behold it in the divine light which glorifies it; for when God sends forth his light, we can see the cross as the master-work of grace. And as long as time continues, men will be able to behold the glories of the crucifixion; for that central cross for ever stands in the light of a Sun which never sets. Not only is this cross the symbol of self-denial and the gateway into an eternal peace with God; but over and above everything else for which it stands, we can see the one triumphant argument for God's love. Or, to state the same thing in other words, the cross is the unanswerable proof that God is not willing "that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (See 2 Pet. 3: 9; cf. 1 Tim. 2: 3, 4.)

The word "but" with which the verse now under consideration begins indicates a contrast—a contrast between human love at its best and that of God. The preceding verse says regarding the former, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: for peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to

die." The *righteous* man simply does that which he ought to do, and gives to every man his due; while the *good* man not only does that which he ought to do: he does all that he can and proves his moral worth by promoting the well-being of him with whom he has to do. And so, according to Paul, one would hardly die for the merely upright or strictly just man who commands our respect; but he might possibly die for the noble, beneficent man who calls out our affection. (See Vincent, *in loco.*) But Jesus was under no illusions about those for whom he died. He gave his life for the unpromising and unresponsive—for sinners of the deepest dye; all because of God's great love for them.

The term "commendeth" is in the present tense, and the implication is that God *continuously* establishes his love in that the death of his Son *remains* as its most striking manifestation. That love still speaks, not only to those who have responded to its call, but also to those who are not concerned with that which God has done for them. And the fact that God, knowing the attitude of the world toward him and his Son, does not abandon it to its own destruction, is its only hope. In the words of Edwin Arlington Robinson,

But after nineteen hundred years
the shame
Still clings, and we have not made
good the loss

That outraged faith had entered in his name.
 Ah, when shall come love's courage to be strong!
 Tell me, O Lord—tell me, O Lord, how long
 Are we to keep Christ writhing on the cross!

The Blessed Results of This Justification in Christ

(Rom. 5: 9-11)

Much more than, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life; and not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

In the first part of the Book of Romans, as we have already seen, Paul showed that both the Jews and the Gentiles were in need of salvation; and then in the latter part of chapter 3 he pointed out the fact that God bestows righteousness upon those who are willing to accept his offer through the sacrificial death of Christ: this fact being confirmed and illustrated in chapter 4. The basis for all of this is where our lesson for today begins, and the great question in this section of our lesson is: How can God demonstrate his love to the sinner, and bestow on him the divine righteousness? And in answer to this, the argument is from the greater to the less. If the answer to this question is made plain, the rest of Paul's teaching will be much easier to understand.

The apostle has repeatedly called to the attention of his readers that God overcame the enmity between him and man by the vicarious death of his Son; and the argument is that if such grace was demonstrated while we were in a state of hostility, when we were in sin and actual enemies of God, then how much more will he do for us now that we are his beloved children in Christ! The expression "much more" is used four times in this and the next section of our lesson for today. And it is well to note the amount of repetition which is contained in Paul's reasoning regarding the manner in which God deals

with his people in bringing them back to him. No one therefore should frown upon such procedure; for repetition is indeed essential to the art of learning.

In speaking of our being reconciled to God, Vincent makes the following observations: "The verb means primarily to *exchange*; and hence to change the relation of hostile parties into a relation of peace; to *reconcile*. It is used of mutual and one-sided enmity. In the former case, the context must show on which side is the active enmity." He then goes on to show that in the Christian sense, the change in the relation of God and man is effected through Christ, and involves the following steps.

1. A movement of God toward man with a view to break down man's hostility, to commend God's love and holiness to him, and to convince him of the enormity and the consequence of sin. It is God who initiates this movement in the person and work of Jesus Christ. See Rom. 5: 6, 8; 2 Cor. 5: 18, 19; Eph. 1: 6; 1 John 4: 19. Hence the passive form of the verb in the passage now under consideration: *we were made subjects* of God's reconciling act.

2. A corresponding movement on man's part toward God; yielding to the appeal of Christ's self-sacrificing love, laying aside his enmity, renouncing his sin, and turning to God in faith and obedience. 3. A consequent change of character in man; the covering, forgiving, cleansing of his sin; a thorough revolution in all his dispositions and principles [2 Cor. 5: 17; Tit. 3: 5]. 4. A corresponding change of relation on God's part, that being removed which alone rendered him hostile to man, so that God can now receive him into fellowship and let loose upon him all his fatherly love and grace. (1 John 1: 3, 7.) Thus there is complete reconciliation. (Word Studies in the New Testament, Vol. III, p. 61.)

The joyful reaction which is described in verse 11 is another indication that God has made our new relationship possible through Christ; for the Christian could not rejoice in this manner, had it not been for that which Christ did to bring about his salvation. Christ, as Paul has repeatedly pointed out, stands between the sinner and God's wrath; and when God's offer of reconciliation is

accepted, the threat of eternal punishment is removed, so long, of course, as the redeemed person remains faithful to the Lord. It is well to keep in mind that the reconciliation is something which we *receive* from God, not because of anything which we did to merit his favor (Eph. 2: 8, 9; Tit. 3: 5), but by believing in his Son, whom he set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood. This is God's unspeakable gift to every sinner who will accept it.

The Grace Manifested through Christ
versus the Ruin Wrought through
Adam

(Rom. 5: 12-17)

Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned. The entire fifth chapter of Romans, as printed in the American Standard Version of the New Testament, is divided into two paragraphs; and it appears that the word "therefore," with which the second paragraph begins, is meant to connect Paul's arguments regarding the reconciliation which he made in the first paragraph with that which he set forth in the second. While this is evidently true, generally speaking, it will have to be admitted that the connection between the two parts of the chapter is not as apparent as one might expect. This is due, in part at least, to the fact that the second paragraph of the chapter is one of the most difficult portions of the entire book to understand.

In order to grasp the meaning which Paul wanted his readers to get, one will have to know something about the apostle's literary style. Vincent, in speaking of this, calls attention to his frequent anacolutha [that is, his changes in grammatical construction, or a lack of grammatical sequence and consistency in sentence structure, in order to express strong emotion], the unclosed parentheses, mixed metaphors, sudden digressions, and obscurities arising from headlong impetus of thought and feeling. Many Bible students regard verses 13-17 of this section of our lesson as being parenthetical; and if this is true, then the thought which begins in verse 12 must be understood in the

light of the explanations of verses 13-17.

The discussion which begins with verse 12 is with reference to the manner in which sin began with the human race, and the sequence shows that Paul intended that to stand in contrast with the blessings which have come to us through Christ. The principal thought which begins in verse 12 is continued in verse 18ff. all of which should be read. The appalling consequences of sin put the human race in direct opposition to God; and it was for that reason that a reconciliation was essential before man could be at peace with his Maker. Although Eve sinned first, it was Adam rather than his wife who plunged the human race into death and destruction; because he was its federal head. The "death" which passed unto all men was probably *spiritual death*, and that, of course, resulted in physical death; for if man had not been cut off from the tree of life he would have lived for ever in sin. (Cf. Gen. 3: 22-24.)

For until the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is a figure of him that was to come.

The principal argument in this part of Paul's discussion, as already noted, is the contrast between the ruin wrought through Adam and the redemption which is accomplished through Christ; but before the apostle completes it, he adds several words of explanation. (1) Although sin existed from Adam till the giving of the law of Moses, it was not charged to their account (the original word for "imputed" is used only here and in Phile. 18). This, however, does not mean that there was no law during that period; for if that had been true, the people who lived during that time could not have been such great sinners. (Cf. Rom. 2: 12-16; Gen. 6: 11-13.) Paul, apparently, was speaking only of a written or specific law, such as was given to Adam, who was a type of Christ.

But not as the trespass, so also is the free gift. For if by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus

Christ, abound unto the many. (2) This verse shows that Paul is speaking of primarily of the result of Adam's sin, rather than the personal sins of the people during that period, in contrast with the blessings which come to the grace of Christ.

And not as through one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment came of one unto condemnation, but the free gift came of many trespasses unto justification. For if, by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one; much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness

reign in life through the one, even Jesus Christ. (3) In this point of contrast, the apostle shows that while the condemnation came as the result of one (Adam's) trespass, God's grace through Christ is the result of many trespasses, that is, God's plan for saving the world grew out of his desire to save, not just one, but all sinners. What therefore was lost in Adam was unconditionally restored in Christ; but his death did much more than that: it made possible the forgiveness of every personal sin of every individual who is willing to accept the offered mercy.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today?
Repeat the golden text.
Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Quote and discuss some general statements of the New Testament regarding the blood of Christ.
In what sense does the blood of Christ cleanse from sin?
What is the specific meaning of "blood" as used in the Bible?

The Golden Text

Discuss the setting of this text and compare it with John 3: 16.
Why did Jesus surrender to his enemies and go to the cross?
Why was the death of Christ essential to the salvation of the world?

The Basis for Man's Reconciliation with God

Show that the cross of Christ is God's way of demonstrating his love for his people.
Why isn't he willing that any one should be lost?
What is the meaning and force of the word "but" in verse 8?
Contrast the love of man at its best with that of God.
What is the significance of the term "commendeth" in the verse now under consideration?

The Blessed Results of This Justification in Christ

What is the force of the expression "much more" in verses 9, 10?
What great question did Paul have before him at the time of this lesson?

Why did Paul repeat himself so often in this section of our lesson?
What important lesson should we learn from this?
What is the primary meaning of the term "reconcile"?
Identify and discuss the four fundamental steps in the process of reconciliation.
What is the reaction of those who have been reconciled to God?
What does Paul mean by saying that we "received the reconciliation"?

The Grace Manifested through Christ versus the Ruin Wrought through Adam

What use did Paul make of the word "therefore" at the beginning of this section of our lesson?
What difficulty do we encounter in the latter part of the chapter from which our lesson is taken?
What is the relation of verses 13-17 to verse 12?
What principal thought did Paul introduce in verse 12?
Why mention Adam's transgression, rather than that of Eve?
In what sense was sin in the world between Adam and Moses?
Why wasn't it imputed during that period?
Was there law between Adam and Moses? Give reasons for your answer.
How do we know that Paul was speaking of the results of Adam's sin, rather than the personal sins of the people?
Discuss the points of contrast between Adam and Christ in verses 13-17.
In what sense did "the free gift come of many trespasses unto justification"?
In what sense did Christ counteract all that Adam did as the federal head of the race?
What more did he do?

Lesson IV—April 28, 1963

BURIED WITH CHRIST IN BAPTISM

Lesson Text

Rom. 6: 1-11

1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

2 God forbid. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?
3 Or are ye ignorant that all we

who were baptized into Christ Je'-sus were baptized into his death?

4 We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have become united with *him* in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of his resurrection;

6 Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so

we should no longer be in bondage to sin;

7 For he that hath died is justified from sin.

8 But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him;

9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death no more hath dominion over him.

10 For the death that he died, he died unto sin once: but the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

11 Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Je'-sus.

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rom. 6: 12-28.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ” (Gal. 3: 27.)

Daily Bible Readings

April 22. M.	The Great Commission (Matt. 28: 18-20; Mark 16: 15, 15)
April 23. T.	Baptism of Christ (Matt. 3: 13-17)
April 24. W.	Rejecting Counsel of God (Luke 7: 24-35)
April 25. T.	Baptism of the Eunuch (Acts 8: 26-40)
April 26. F.	Obedience Essential (1 John 2: 4; 2 Thess. 1: 7-9)
April 27. S.	Baptized into Christ (Gal. 3: 27-29)
April 28. S.	Baptized Same Hour of Night (Acts 16: 16-34)

TIME.—A.D. 58.

PLACE.—Romans was written from Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Roman Christians.

Introduction

There is perhaps no New Testament teaching about which there has been more controversy than the subject of baptism. Some have emphasized it to the extent that, in their estimation, not even an infant can be saved without it, while, on the other hand, some deny that it has any importance whatsoever; and as a result they make no pretense of administering it. Between these two extreme views, we can find every shade of opinion on the subject; and we also may expect to find the truth regarding the question between these extremes.

The controversy about baptism centers chiefly around four points, namely, (1) The action of baptism—that is, what particular thing is done when a person is baptized. (2) The purpose or design of baptism—that is, what is it for? (3) The subject of baptism—that is, who may be scripturally baptized? (4) The administrator of baptism—that is, who has the scriptural right to baptize? It is

always interesting and profitable to make a comprehensive study of any subject which pertains to our salvation; and if that is done, we are in much better position to consider any phase of the question.

When Jesus gave the great commission to his disciples, he authorized them to make disciples of all nations, that is, inform them regarding Jesus and his plan for saving the world, and then baptize all who are willing to accept his way of life. This is to say that no person should be baptized until he knows enough about the subject to enable him to do intelligently that which Jesus requires of him. (Cf. Matt. 28: 19; John 4: 1; 6: 44, 45; Rom. 6: 16-18.) Any person therefore who submits to baptism *b e f o r e* he understands that which is required of him, is only doing a part of that which the Lord has authorized, that is, he is only submitting to the physical act of baptism. And in the same manner, when

any one come to the baptism authorized by Jesus with even one reservation in his heart, he cannot be pleas-

ing to God. The outward act may be correct, but his heart is not right in the sight of God.

The Golden Text

"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ." The golden text for today's lesson is taken from that section of Galatians which, perhaps better than any other part of the New Testament, sets forth the difference between the law and the gospel—Gal. 3: 15-4: 7. In discussing the purpose of the law in its relation to the gospel, Paul first, in Verses 15-22, shows that the covenant with Abraham was not on the basis of law, for the law did not exist until four hundred and fifty years after the promise was made; and he further shows that the covenant which was made with that patriarch was not displaced by the law. And then in 3: 23-4: 7, the apostle points out that the law, in reality, was only for "schoolboys," a kind of "guardian" or "tutor" to lead those who were not fully developed unto Christ. (Cf. Heb. 11: 39, 40.) This must have been a devastating, as well as a humiliating, blow to Paul's enemies, the Judaizers.

It should be observed that the "faith" in the paragraph from which the golden text is taken is another name for the gospel. This is certain because the article "the" precedes it in the original. When Luke says that "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6: 7), he was saying that they were obedient to the gospel. The gospel and the faith are one and the same thing. And so, Paul said to the Galatians, "For ye are all sons of God, through [the] faith [that is, through the gospel], in Christ Jesus." In other words, they were saved in Christ as a result of their having obeyed the

gospel; and to be in Christ is to be in the church: for the body of Christ is the church. (Cf. Acts 4: 12; 2: 47; Eph. 1: 22, 23; 5: 23.) The "sonship" is Christ must be understood in the light of the figure which Paul has under consideration, namely, the childhood *versus* the maturity state.

And inasmuch as there is no salvation out of Christ (cf. 2 Tim. 2: 10; Acts 4: 12), it is, of course, absolutely essential that those desiring salvation get into Christ; and the golden text affirms that that is accomplished by baptism. The expression "did put on Christ" (cf. Rom. 13: 14) means, according to Thayer, that they became "so possessed of the mind of Christ as in thought, feeling, and action to resemble him and, as it were, reproduce the life he lived." This was a common expression among the Greeks and Romans, when they wanted to indicate their desire to imitate some one else. Arndt-Gingrich note that Alexander the Great liked to put on the holy apparel of the gods, "and so became Ammon, Artemis, Hermes, Hercules." The use of the figure is expressed by Vincent in this way: "To put on Christ implies making his character, feeling, and works our own." He then quotes Chrysostom as saying, "If Christ is Son of God, and thou hast put him on, having the Son in thyself and being made like unto him, thou hast been brought into one family and one nature." And again, "He who is clothed appears to be that with which he is clothed." This golden text should be a profound lesson to every professed follower of Christ.

The Text Explained

The Manner in Which Righteousness
by Faith Is Attained
The Proposition Stated
(Rom. 6: 1-4)

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein? It should be recalled that when Paul stated the theme of his epistle to the Romans (1: 16, 17), he made it plain that the gospel con-

tains God's plan of righteousness, which makes it possible for him to look upon the sinner as if he had never sinned. After showing the need for such a plan in Rom. 1:

18-3: 20, the apostle discusses the divine side of the plan at length in the remaining verses of chapter three, and on through chapter five, concluding that part of his arguments with these words: "And the law came in besides, that the trespass might

abound; but where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly: that, as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 5: 20, 21.)

The statement just quoted is followed by the questions at the beginning of chapter 6, the first of which, "What shall we say then?", being, as some one has noted, "a transition-expression and a debater's phrase," aimed at turning the discussion from God's justification to the sinner's sanctification. Or, to state the same thing in other words, Paul now proposes to show the manner in which the righteousness of the gospel is to be realized. This is done in great detail in chapters 6-8. If the justification which has been provided by God is not complemented by the sinner's sanctification, that is, his being redeemed from the world and set apart unto God, the grace of the divine side would be in vain. (Cf. Gal. 2: 21a; Eph. 2: 8-10; Phil. 2: 12, 13.)

Therefore, if according to Paul's conclusion in the closing verses of chapter 5 that grace abounded more exceedingly in proportion to the prevalence of sin, it would be but natural for the untaught and thoughtless to ask, "Well, if that is the case, why not continue in sin, and thereby make more grace possible?" Paul's answer to that question is a ringing "No." and he follows it by a reason for his emphatic negation. When one dies to sin, he is utterly and for ever out of any relation to it, that is, so long as he remains dead to it; and that, of course, would make it wholly impossible for him to live in it. Death always carries with it the idea of separation; and death to sin, practically speaking, is accomplished by faith and repentance. Faith is a change of mind with reference to God and his offer of salvation through Christ, as revealed by the Holy Spirit, while repentance is a change of mind with reference to sin; and when they are both genuine, the result is death to sin. It should be observed that there is a great difference between being dead *in* sin, and in being dead to sin. (Cf. Eph. 2: 1ff.)

Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: t h a t l i k e a s

Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life.

Paul's whole argument here is based on death to sin, and the only alternative to its acceptance is to confess ignorance of the rite by which they were received into the church. The apostle does not imply ignorance on their part that they had been baptized; he simply asked if they were unaware of the significance of the act. If they understood its meaning, then they would also know that they had died to sin; for baptism, being a burial, is only for those who have died; and since the subject is that of sin, their death was with reference to it.

The baptism authorized by the gospel is both "into" (*eis*) Christ and "into" (*eis*) his death, which means that it is transitional, that is, by it one passes from without to within Christ and his death. To be baptized into Christ is to become one with him, and to be baptized into his death is to become identified with its purpose. "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. 2: 20a.) This is another way of saying that the old self has passed away, and that Christ has taken its place; all of which means that the new man stands within the same relationship to sin, as does Christ.

Practically all Bible scholars recognize verse 4 as being an allusion to the custom of baptizing by immersion. So Wesley, Barnes, Clarke, Conybeare and Howson, et al. William Sanday points out that New Testament baptism has a double function, namely, (1) to bring the redeemed person into personal contact with Christ, so close that it may be correctly described as union with him; and (2) to express symbolically a series of acts which correspond to those things which took place in the case of Jesus in making salvation possible, namely his death, burial, and resurrection. (Cf. 1 Cor. 15:

1-4.) This is another way of saying that the history of redemption is reproduced in the redeemed; and only immersion will answer to the demands of these requirements.

Burial is the natural sequence of death, and a kind of seal of its reality; for only the dead are buried.

Baptism therefore, which is both "immersion" and "emersion," is a symbol of burying a dead body and of raising it up to a new life; and it is for this reason that baptism is directly concerned with the three fundamental facts of the gospel. The sinner must die, just as Jesus did, before he is buried; and after his burial he must be raised up to a new life, in keeping with the experience of Jesus. Referring again to Sanday we note that "all these the Christian has to undergo in a moral and spiritual sense, and by means of his union with Christ. As Christ by his death on the cross ceased from all contact with sin, so the Christian, united with Christ in his baptism, has done once for all with sin and lives henceforth a reformed life dedicated to God."

In saying that Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, Paul has reference to all the perfections of God which contributed to his resurrection. When we consider Paul's remarks regarding this in Ephesians, it is safe to conclude that in nothing was the splendor of God's power revealed so much as in the event now under consideration. (Read Eph. 1: 19ff.) The term "newness" which is used to indicate the life of the Christian is a stronger expression than *new life*. According to Arndt-Gingrich, the word has the connotation of something extraordinary—that of a new quality of life. (Cf. Rom. 7: 6.) In writing to the Corinthians, Paul refers to this new quality of life as a new creature, or, as the marginal note has it, *a new creation*. (2 Cor. 5: 17; cf Tit. 3: 5.) The New English Bible renders Rom. 6: 4 in these words: "By baptism we were buried with him, and lay dead, in order that, as Christ was raised from the dead in the splendour of the Father, so also we might set our feet upon the new path of life." Phillips puts it this way: "so we too might rise to life on a new plane altogether."

Union with Christ Brings Victory
over Sin
(Rom. 6: 5-7)

For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away,

that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin; for he that hath died is justified from sin.

The term "for" connects that which is said in this section of our lesson with that which was said regarding the newness of life in the preceding section; and the purpose of this section is to show the absolute necessity for such a life. Our baptism is not concerned with his death and burial only, but also with his resurrection. It was sin which caused the death of Jesus, and it is sin which also makes it essential that we die; for without our death to sin, we could not be buried with him through baptism into death. But if we were united in that aspect of his experience, we must likewise be united with him in the likeness of his resurrection; for God will as certainly raise up the penitent sinner who has been buried with Christ in baptism, as he did in the case of Christ. (Cf. Col. 2: 12, 13; 3: 1.) Anyone therefore who really dies with Christ must of necessity also share in the likeness of his resurrection; which, as we have already seen, obligates the child of God to a new quality or kind of life.

The need for the new type of living is further confirmed by the reference to the crucifixion of the "old man," which is our old self while dominated by sin. The crucifixion of that old self resulted in the death of the body which was ruled by sin; and that implies that the domination of sin has come to an end. Quoting Paul's language to the Galatians again, we can see the practical meaning of this. "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me." (Gal. 2: 20.) This, in brief, is what is implied in dying to sin and in being raised in newness of life; for it is Christ, and not sin, who dominates the new man or body. This does not mean, of course, that it is impossible for the new creature in Christ to sin; but it does mean that he will not live a life of sin, so long as he remains in the Lord's favor. (Cf. 1 John 3: 9.)

The final clause of the sentence which makes up this section of our lesson, "for he that hath died is jus-

tilled from sin," fully confirms the fact that the rule of sin is at an end in the life of any person who has been crucified with Christ. Sin is here personified, and death is pictured as having cleared the redeemed of any and all claims which sin had on them, previous to their crucifixion. Alford paraphrases the clause in these words: "For, as a man that is dead is acquitted and released from guilt and bondage (among *men*: no reference to God's judgment of him): so a man that has died to sin is acquitted from the guilt of sin, and released from its bondage."

Our Death to Sin Implies a Constant Conflict against Evil (Rom. 6: 8-11)

But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him; knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death no more hath dominion over him. For the death that he died, he died unto sin once: but the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus.

Paul here resumes the main thought of his reasoning, after the explanations in verses 5-7; and his aim is to show that the new quality of life which the redeemed receive in Christ must be dedicated to God. The "living with Christ" is not the future life in heaven, but the Christian life here and now. The whole context shows that Paul has the present life in mind. "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. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory." (Col.

3: 1-4; read also verses 5-17 and observe the word "therefore" in verses 2 and 12.)

That which has just been said is sufficient to show that the new life which the Christian lives is the same in principle as that of Christ, namely, inaccessible to death. The scripture plainly says that Christ is our life; and we know that he cannot die. The Christian, of course, can terminate his life by defection from Christ; but if he remains faithful, as he is expected to do, there is no power which can separate him from the love of God. (See Rom. 8: 31-39.) There are few verses in the New Testament which offer greater encouragement to the Christian for constant living in Christ, than those which make up this section of our lesson. Read them carefully and prayerfully.

In commenting on verse 11, The Expositor's Greek Testament says, "In this verse the application is made of all that precedes. The death with Christ, the life with Christ, are real, yet to be realized. The truth of being a Christian is contained in them, yet the calling of the Christian is to live up to them. We may forget what we should be; we may also (and this is how Paul puts it) forget what we *are*. We are dead to sin in Christ's death; we are alive to God in Christ's resurrection; let us regard ourselves as such in *Christ Jesus*. The essence of our faith is a union to him in which his experience becomes ours. This is the theological reply to antinomianism." This last term is a compound word from the Greek —*anti*, against, and *nomos*, law—and signifies that "under the gospel dispensation, the moral law is of no use or obligation, on the ground that faith alone is necessary to salvation." (Webster.) Phil. 3: 12-4: 1 is probably Paul's strongest statement against the doctrine of antinomianism.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why is there such a wide difference of opinion regarding baptism?
Discuss some of the views which people hold regarding the subject.
What are the chief points around which

the controversy concerning the subject centers?
What instruction did Jesus give his disciples regarding the question?
What is needed before any person is ready to be baptized?

The Golden Text

Discuss the context of this portion of our lesson for today.

In what connection did Paul write the words of the golden text?
 What is the meaning of "faith" as used by him here?
 What does it mean for one to be in Christ?
 In what sense does the baptized believer "put on Christ"?
 What lesson should we learn from this?

The Manner in Which Righteousness by Faith Is Attained
 The Proposition Stated

Give a brief resume of the Roman letter up to the text for today's lesson.
 What was Paul's purpose in asking the question, "What shall we say then"?
 In what way are the justification of God and the sanctification of man related?
 Why would any one even suggest that people continue in sin, that grace may abound?
 How did Paul deal with that idea?
 In what sense do people who obey the gospel die to sin?
 Discuss the meanings of "faith" and "repentance."
 What is the difference in dying in sin and dying to sin?
 Why did Paul ask the question about the possible ignorance of their baptism?
 Into what are penitent people baptized?
 What is meant by being baptized into Christ and into his death?
 What is the Bible meaning of baptism, so far as the act is concerned?

What double function does baptism have in the plan of salvation?
 Show how baptism is related to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.
 What is meant by the expression that Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father?
 What did Paul mean by saying that they were raised to walk in "newness of life"?
 What is the difference between a "new life" and "newness of life"?
 Union with Christ Brings Victory over Sin
 What is the significance of the term "for" and the beginning of verse 5?
 Why must our baptism be concerned with both the death and resurrection of Christ?
 Why say that our old man was crucified with him?
 How did Paul illustrate this principle in his own life?
 What is the meaning of the clause, "for he that hath died is justified from sin"?

Our Death to Sin Implies a Constant Conflict with Evil

What is Paul's main purpose in this section of our lesson?
 When does this "living with Christ" take place? Give reasons for your answer.
 Assuming that the Christian remains faithful to the Lord, what is the nature of his life in Christ?
 How, only, can he lose this life?
 What application does the apostle make in verse 11?

Lesson V—May 5, 1963

NO CONDEMNATION IN CHRIST

Lesson Text

Rom. 8: 1-14

1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Je'-sus.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Je'-sus made me free from the law of sin and of death.

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

4 That the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

5 For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

6 For the mind of the flesh is life and peace:

7 Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be:

8 And they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

9 But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

10 And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness.

11 But if the Spirit of God raised up Je'-sus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Je'-sus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

12 So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh:

13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye must die; but if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rom. 8: 15-25.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?*” (Rom. 8: 33.)

Daily Bible Readings

April 29. M.....	Walk in the Light (1 John 1: 1-10)
April 30. T.....	Christ Our Advocate (1 John 2: 1-4)
May 1. W.....	Must Not Serve the Flesh (Gal. 5: 13-19)
May 2. T.....	Victory through Christ (Rom. 7: 18-25)
May 3. F.....	Christ Justifies (Eph. 2: 1-10)
May 4. S.....	God Justifies through Christ (Rom. 8: 31-39)
May 5. S.....	Example of Abraham (James 2: 20-22)

TIME.—A.D. 58.

PLACE.—Romans was written from Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Roman Christians.

Introduction

There are two great rival kingdoms in the world in which we live, and every responsible person is in one or the other of them. There is no neutral ground upon which any one can stand. These kingdoms are, of course, the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Satan. (Cf. Col. 1: 13.) The kingdom of Christ, also referred to as his church, is that body over which he reigns as king. When the idea of the church is set forth in the New Testament, the reference is to that body of people who have been called out of the kingdom of Satan, in response to the gospel of Christ (2 Thess. 2: 13, 14), and they are said to be *in Christ* because they are his body. (Cf. Eph. 1: 22, 23; Col. 1: 18, 24.) We saw in our last lesson just how people are brought into Christ. (See Gal. 3: 26, 27; Rom. 6: 3, 4.)

The mission of Christ to the earth was and is to endeavor to rescue every responsible individual from the rule of the devil. (Acts 26: 18.) While Jesus was here in the flesh, he made possible the salvation of all men by his death upon the cross, and his resurrection from the dead. (Heb. 2: 9; Rom. 6: 8, 9.) And then before returning to the Father to begin his reign at his right hand, he gave to

his disciples that which is known as the Great Commission. This commission outlines the plan by which the Lord’s rescue work is to be done; and it is easy to see that the plan contains two mutually dependent parts, namely, the divine and the human. It is a fact, clearly set forth in the New Testament, that no salvation is possible without the proper function of both of these parts. (Cf. Eph. 2: 8-10.)

The great struggle between the Lord and the devil, between the forces of right and the powers of evil, is no light thing; for it is a matter of life and death. Every one who remains in the kingdom of Satan will be eternally lost, while every one who is faithful to the Lord will be eternally saved. And since the cost of salvation is so great, the Lord, so far as he is concerned, does not intend to lose a single redeemed person. If any one is lost, it will be due to his own fault, and not that of the Lord’s. Therefore, when one enters into the fold of the Lord there is not only safety from any danger without, but there is no condemnation within; and it is for that reason that he may count on the help of Christ throughout his efforts to live for him. (Cf. Heb. 4: 14-16.)

The Golden Text

“*Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?*” The entire eighth chapter of Romans is devoted to a discussion of the superior advantages of sonship in Christ which are open to the believer. And those who have carefully followed the reasoning of Paul regarding the Lord’s plan for saving the world, can easily

see that this chapter constitutes the climax of his arguments. It is also easy to see that the chapter has clearly defined boundaries, which may be expressed in these words, “No condemnation; no separation;” for it opens with the declaration that there is no condemnation, and it closes with the affirmation that there

is no separation. No one, of course, can fully understand the chapter, unless it is considered in the light of the entire book of which it is a part.

We should never lose sight of the fact that the Book of Romans is devoted to the plan of salvation through faith in Christ, in contrast with the law of Moses. The very word *salvation* suggests danger, but is also proclaims a way of deliverance; it postulates failure, but promises realization. Referring again to the book as a whole, the way of salvation is declared to be that of faith in God's provision of grace, which is interpreted as action wherein God has placed righteousness at man's disposal; and that this has been done in such a way as to show at once that God is both just and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus. God therefore does not violate any principle of the moral law, and does no violence to his own eternal character of holiness in extending pardon and peace to sinful men.

The Text Explained

Only in Christ Is There Freedom from Sin and Death

(Rom. 8: 1-8)

There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and death. The word "therefore" connects that which is said in the chapter now before us with that which goes before, and especially with chapter seven. In Rom. 6: 12-14 Paul says, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof: neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law, but under grace." The apostle then goes on in the remainder of the chapter and the first six verses of the next to show, by means of two illustrations (the figure of transferring slaves from one master to another and the marriage relationship) something of the new responsibility which those who have been delivered from the law are under.

This salvation which he thus provided for man is presented under three heads, namely, (1) it deals with his past as justification; (2) with his present as sanctification; and (3) with his future as glorification. The golden text for today's lesson is a part of the assurance of God's eternal and unchangeable love in Christ for his people; and the section of the chapter from which it is taken constitutes one of the greatest affirmations of that truth on record. If God has done so much to save us, will he not continue the work until the task is completed? He has chosen us through the gospel, and who can lay anything to the charge of those whom he has elected? Only Christ could condemn us (John 5: 22); but since Christ died for us and is now at God's right hand making intercession for us, it is certain that he will not condemn those whom God has justified. There is therefore no one who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect.

The remainder of chapter seven is devoted to the purpose of the law of Moses and its relation to sin, in which Paul shows that although good within itself, the law brought the occasion and possibility of sin, resulting in the struggle within the sinner from which only Christ can deliver him. All of this led Paul, who used himself as an illustration, to exclaim, "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then I of myself with the mind, indeed, serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." (Rom. 7: 24-25.) The statement "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" means that he thanked God for the deliverance from sin through Christ.

And so, in the first verse of chapter eight, the apostle declares that there is no condemnation to those who have thus been delivered, and who are in Christ Jesus, that is, in his body, which is his church. The term "condemnation" literally means *sentence* of condemnation. The reason for this is stated in verse 2: The law, or regulative principle, which is inspired by the Spirit, brings to the believer the life which is in Christ

Jesus; and not only so, but this law also furnishes all that is needed for the continuation of the Christian's life in Christ. (Cf. Eph. 1: 3.) The "Law of the Spirit" is but another name for the gospel, called also a "law of faith" in Rom. 3: 27. Paul has already said (Rom. 1: 16, 17) that the gospel is God's power unto salvation to every one who believes; and Peter declares 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; 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." (2 Pet. 1: 3, 4.) James Denney notes that "Sin and Death are conceived objectively as powers which impose their own law on unredeemed men." (Cf. Rom. 7: 23.) The law of sin and death cannot refer to the law of Moses, as such; for that law, in and of itself, was good. Sin (personified) simply used the law to bring about its work of destruction. (See Rom. 7: 9-14.)

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

The verses just quoted explain how God accomplished the work of making men free from the law of sin and death. The New English Bible renders them in these words: "What the law could never do, because our lower nature robbed it of all potency, God has done: by sending his own Son in a form like that of our own sinful nature, and as a sacrifice for sin, he has passed judgment against sin within that very nature, so that the commandment of the law may find fulfilment in us, whose conduct, no longer under the control of our lower nature, is directed by the Spirit."

The law referred to here was the law of Moses, which would have resulted in making people acceptable to God, if they could have kept it perfectly; but since that was impossible, due to human inability to live

perfect lives, the result was that sin abounded on every hand (Rom. 5: 20; 7: 13) and a new and better plan for saving the race had to be devised (Acts 13; 38, 39). "But when the fulness of time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." (Gal. 4: 4, 5.) According to the text now under consideration, Jesus was sent (1) in the likeness of sinful flesh (Phil. 2: 7, 8; Heb. 2:

14-18; 4: 15), and (2) "for sin," that is, as an offering for sin (see marginal note, cf. Heb. 7: 27; 9: 28; 10: 10); with the result that sin was condemned in the flesh.

The original word for "ordinance" literally means *regulation, requirement, commandment*, and in this particular place, according to the marginal reading, Vincent, Arndt-Gingrich, et al, the idea is that of the requirements of the law, that is, the righteousness or kind of life which the law of Moses required of those who lived under it, but which was never possible because of the weakness of the flesh. However, all of this was changed with the inauguration of the scheme of redemption which was made possible by the mission of Christ, and man is now able to live a righteous life in him. According to Moffatt's translation, God sent his Son "to deal with sin [and], he condemned sin in the flesh, in order to secure the fulfilment of the Law's requirements in our lives, as we live and move, not by the flesh but by the Spirit." (Cf. Gal. 2: 21.)

For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace: because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be: and they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Although the term "Spirit" in verses 4-9a of the text now before us is spelled with a capital "S," Bible students are not agreed as to what Paul had in mind, whether the Holy Spirit or the human spirit. But, viewing the matter from the practical point of view, there does not appear to be any material difference, so far

as the lesson is concerned. Robertson thinks that the reference is most likely to the Holy Spirit, or else to the renewed spirit of man. If the reference is to the Holy Spirit, then the meaning is that the people in question are living as he directs through the inspired message; but if the reference is to the human spirit, then the meaning is that the regenerated ones (cf. John 3: 5; Tit. 3: 5) are living according to the principles of the gospel. In either case, the Holy Spirit gave the inspired message, and those who are born again are ordering their lives accordingly.

The real lesson which we should learn from the verses now under consideration is the difference between worldliness and deep spirituality. Worldliness does not consist solely in doing certain things, or in being in certain places. It is, rather, an attitude or view of life, a state of mind, a way of thinking (Matt. 16: 23; Phil. 2: 5; Col. 3: 2.) A person, for example, might be in the most worldly atmosphere and yet not feel at home there, but inwardly revolting against the place and impatient to get away. While on the other hand, one may be in a thoroughly spiritual atmosphere, in a church building, for instance, where New Testament worship is taking place, and yet not be in harmony with the spirit of the occasion, but far away in both mind and spirit. It is therefore the trend of one's life which determines his destiny, rather than isolated acts. Thus, when men and women are engrossed by the material things of life, then, however punctual their formal religion may be, they are worldly; and those men and women who, despite their manifold mistakes, still reckon with God and take seriously the teaching of Jesus, are spiritual and follow after the Spirit. The contrast which Paul sets forth in verses 5-8 is also discussed in Gal. 5: 16-26. (See also James 4: 4; 1 John 2: 15-17; Rom. 12: 1, 2.)

The Change Which Is Wrought
by the Spirit of Christ
(Rom. 8: 9-11)

But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ is in you,

the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

The purpose of this section of our lesson is to apply to the Lord's people that which is taught in verses 5-8; and the force of Paul's reasoning is this: You [an emphatic expression] can please God; for you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. The original word for the expression "if so be that" (*eiper*) means, according to Arndt-Gingrich, *if indeed, if after all, since*; and the passage is translated by Moffatt in these words: "But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells within you." The personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit is not only clearly taught in the New Testament (1 Cor. 6: 19, 20); it is essential if one is to be in favor with God (Acts 2: 38, 39; 5: 32; Eph. 3: 14-19).

We learn from Eph. 3: 14ff that Christ dwells in the hearts of Christians by faith, as a result of the preparation made by the Spirit, which is another way of saying that they have been renewed or made new creatures (2 Cor. 5: 17; Tit. 3: 5); or, to change the figure somewhat, God's people today are made "into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye are also builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit." (See Eph. 2:

19-22.) And so verse 10 of the text now under consideration sets forth the consequences of the indwelling Christ in his people. We learned in the first part of chapter 6 that we who have been redeemed first died to sin, and then were raised to newness of life; and that we are alive unto God in Christ Jesus. (Cf. Col. 3: 4.) Therefore, with Christ dwelling in us, the body which died to sin at our conversion remains dead; and the spirit which was made alive remains alive unto God. Conditions could not be otherwise with Christ as our abiding Guest. "Righteousness" probably refers to the righteous life which is lived, following justification or the imputed righteousness. (See Rom. 5: 1-11.) Some Bible students think that verse 11 refers to the resurrection to immortality, and that may be true; but there are others

who are of the opinion that Paul is saying that God through the indwelling Spirit will raise our bodies into righteous service for him. It is interesting to note that all three of the Divine Personages are at work in restoring the redeemed people to their proper places.

A Life of Holiness Therefore Is
Now Possible
(Rom. 8: 12-14)

So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh: 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. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Paul, in chapter 6, pointed out the fact that Christian people have been delivered from their former master, sin, and that they are under no further obligations to him; and he here repeats that statement, along with the consequences which will follow if such service is rendered. He also shows how the deeds of the body, or flesh, are to be destroyed, namely, by the Spirit, that is, by following his direction. (Cf. Col. 3: 5-17.) Too many people try to correct their lives from the circumference, rather than from the center. Or, to state the same thing in other words, they must alter their habits by correcting their spirit, rather than attempting to improve their spirit by changing their habits, if they are to please the Lord; and

this can be done only by subjecting themselves to the direction of the Spirit. (Cf. Heb. 12: 14.)

The leading of the Spirit consists of all the influences, such as direct teaching through the inspired word, providential guidance, and strengthening and interceding, as set forth in Eph. 3: 16; Rom. 8: 26, 27; Phil. 2: 12, 13; all of which is in keeping with the revealed message. *The Spirit of God never works independent of or contrary to that which is found in the New Testament.* The following quotation from the Lipscomb-Shepherd Commentary on Romans appears to be apropos: "Those thus led are already in Christ, and in them the Holy Spirit dwells. The leading is both internal and external. To whatever extent the Holy Spirit by its indwelling strengthens the human spirit to enable it to control the flesh, to that extent the leading is internal; to whatever extent the motives of 'the law of the Spirit,' when brought to bear on the heart in the New Testament, enlighten and strengthen, and so enable it to keep the body in subjection, to that extent the leading is external. The leading, then, consists of the whole of the influences of every kind exercised by the Holy Spirit on the human spirit, enabling it to keep the body under. Hence, the exhortation given: 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure.' (Phil. 2: 12, 13.)"

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today's lesson?
Repeat the golden text.
Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What are the two great rival kingdoms in the world?
In what way are all people related to them?
What is the difference between the kingdom of Christ and the church of the Lord?
How does one become a member of the church?
Why did Jesus come to the earth?
How does he propose to save men from sin?
What is the Lord's attitude toward those who are saved?

The Golden Text

Who are God's elect and how were they elected?
What is the over-all message of the eighth chapter of Romans?
What are its "boundaries"?
What does the term "salvation" suggest?

Under what three heads is salvation presented in the Book of Romans?
Discuss the significance of each of these headings.

In what connection did Paul write the words which make up the golden text for today?

Only in Christ Is There Freedom from Sin and Death

What is the purpose of the term "therefore" in verse 1?
Discuss briefly the relation between chapter 8 and the preceding chapters of Romans.
What is the over-all purpose of the last part of chapter 7?
Why is there no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus?
What is the law of the Spirit of life? Give reasons for your answer.
What claim do the writers of the New Testament make for the gospel?
In what way are "sin and death" presented in the text now before us?
How did God accomplish the redemption of the human race?

Why couldn't this be done through the law of Moses?
 Wherein was the law weak or impotent?
 What two things are affirmed of the coming of Christ?
 In what way is the ordinance of the law fulfilled in Christian people?
 What contrast does Paul draw between the flesh and the Spirit?
 What is meant by the terms "flesh" and "Spirit"?
 What is the real lesson which we should learn from verses 5-8?
 Discuss the meaning of "worldliness" and "Spirituality"?

The Change Which Is Wrought
 by the Spirit of Christ

What is the principal lesson of verses 9-11?

What does the New Testament teach regarding the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit?
 Why does Paul say that if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his?
 Why is the body dead and the spirit alive where Jesus is?
 In what sense will God raise those in whom his Spirit dwells?

A Life of Holiness Therefore Is Now Possible

Why aren't Christians debtors to the flesh, to live after it?
 In what way can the deeds of the body be put to death?
 What mistake do many people make in trying to reform their lives?
 In what way are people led by the Spirit?

Lesson VI—May 12, 1963

CHRIST THE END OF THE LAW

Lesson Text

Rom. 10: 1-15

1 Brethren, my heart's desire and my supplication to God is for them, that they may be saved.

2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

3 For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.

4 For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth.

5 For Mo'ses writeth that the man that doeth the righteousness which is of the law shall live thereby.

6 But the righteousness which is of faith saith thus, Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down:)

7 Or, Who shall descend into the abyss? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead.)

8 But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach:

9 Because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Je'sus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved:

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be put to shame.

12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek: for the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon him:

13 For, Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

14 How then shall they call on him whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? even as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things!

Devotional Reading.—Rom. 10: 16-21.

Golden Text.—"He hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross."
 (Col. 2: 14.)

Daily Bible Readings

May 6. M.	.....	Purpose of the Law (Gal. 3: 23-29)
May 7. T.	.....	No Justification by the Law (Gal. 2: 11-21)
May 8. W.	.....	Christ Fulfills the Law (Matt. 5: 17-20)
May 9. T.	.....	The Law and Marriage (Rom. 7: 1-7)

May 10. F.	Law Nailed to the Cross (Col. 2: 14-17)
May 11. S.	Law of the Spirit of Life (Rom. 8: 1-9)
May 12. S.	Perfect Law of Liberty (James 1: 19-27)

TIME.—A.D. 58.

PLACE.—Romans was written from Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Roman Christians.

Introduction

A given passage of scripture can best be understood in the light of its context, and this is especially true of the passage now under consideration. The lesson text for today is taken from Paul's discussion of the rejection of the Jew; and that, in turn, must be considered in the light of the over-all purpose of the book itself. If those who study these lessons will keep before them an analysis of Paul's letter to the Romans, it will be much easier to get his principal point of view in any particular lesson. Without going into detail, that is, without giving all the sub-divisions, it should be noted that the Book of Romans has five principal parts, namely, (1) The Introduction, 1: 1-17; (2) The Doctrinal Section of the Letter, 1: 18-8: 39; (3) The Problem of the Rejection of Israel, 9: 1-11: 36; (4) Practical Exhortations, 12: 1-15: 13; and (5) Personal Matters: Explanations, Greetings, and Benedictions, 15: 14-16: 27.

As Paul began the discussion of the doctrinal issues involved, he first showed the terrible condition of the Gentile world. The Jews, of course, readily agreed that the picture which the apostle painted in the closing part of chapter 1 was true in all of its details; but Paul told the Jews that they were no better, so far as their standing in the sight of God was concerned. "What then, are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we before laid to the charge both of Jews and Greeks, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none

righteous, no, not one; . . . for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3: 9, 10, 23; cf. 2: 1ff.) Paul's reason for stating these things was that the time had arrived in the economy of God when all men were on an equal footing before him, and all would have to be saved in the same way, or upon the same basis. (Cf. Rom. 11: 32; Gal. 3: 22.) This new way of becoming righteous in God's sight is revealed in the gospel, and is open alike to Jews and Gentiles who are willing to accept it. (Rom. 1: 16, 17.)

But the Jews as a whole refused to accept the gospel, and their failure to do so raised a serious question; and many gospel preachers of that day were no doubt frequently asked to explain this strange conduct on the part of the chosen people of God. This refusal to accept the gospel, of course, led to the rejection of the Jews, and prompted the question, Was God unfaithful to his promises in his rejection of Israel? But Paul explained that the failure of the Jews to accept the gospel was due to a lack of faith on their part. They simply were not ready to enter into the filial relationship which Jesus taught and represented. However, the apostle expressed the hope that the Jews would eventually accept Christ; and since this question was certain to arise in Rome, as it did everywhere else, Paul resolved to include a treatment of it in his letter to the brethren there. It is in this light that we must consider the lesson text for today.

The Golden Text

"He hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross" Those who are familiar with the teaching of the Bible are aware of the fact that God dealt with all people from Adam to Moses upon the same general principle; but with the giving of the law at Sinai, a distinction was made between the Jews and Gentiles in their relation to him. The Jews were to

be governed entirely under the terms of the law which was given to Moses; but the Gentiles were allowed to go in their own way, with no further direct instruction from God. (See Acts 14: 16.) But this did not mean that the Gentiles had no responsibility before God; for if that had been true, they could not have been adjudged such great sinners. (Cf.

Acts 14: 17; Rom. 2: 14, 15.) But any one who will read the epistles of Paul, he will soon see that the law of Moses was to be only a temporary arrangement; and that in due course of time it was to be removed. (See Gal. 3: 15-4: 7; Eph. 2: 14-22.)

But taking an over-all view of the question now before us, it seems that during the fifteen hundred years between the giving of the law of Moses and the inauguration of the kingdom of Christ, God was using the Jews and Gentiles to demonstrate two essential truths, namely, (1) he was allowing the Jews to demonstrate that no one can be saved merely by keeping a law, Rom. 3: 19, 20; and (2) he was, at the same time, permitting the Gentiles to demonstrate that natural, that is, moral religion is wholly inadequate for the needs of the fallen race. (Rom. 2: 11-16.) And after sufficient time had elapsed for these two demonstrations to be completed, God sent forth his Son to be the Saviour of men; and that means that the purpose of the law had been accomplished. (Cf. Gal. 4: 4; 1 John 4: 14.)

The words which serve as our golden text for today are taken from that section of the Colossian letter in which Paul was dealing with that which is known to Bible students as the Colossian heresy; and if one will read the entire second chapter, of which the golden text is a part, he will see that the apostle was warning the Colossian Christians against four fatal errors, which were probably the constituent parts of the one erroneous system which was being urged upon them. The four errors are, (1) a self-styled philosophy or *gnosis* (knowledge) (Col. 2: 4, 8); (2) Jewish ritualism (Col. 2: 11, 14, 16, 17); (3) angel worship (Col. 2: 18); and (4) ascetic practices (Col. 2: 20-23). Any one therefore who will consider the circumstances under which Paul wrote the words of the golden text will have no trouble in seeing that the old legal system which was given through Moses has no more place in the reign of Christ than the other fatal errors of the Colossian heresy.

The Text Explained

The Manner in Which the Jews Missed the Way (Rom. 10: 1-4)

Brethren, my heart's desire and my supplication to God is for them, that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth.

When Paul began his discussion of the rejection of the Jews, as a result of their having rejected the gospel, he said, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh." (Rom. 9: 1-3.) These are not the words of a man who was bitter toward the Jews, but the heart-felt expression of one who would have

given his life for their salvation, if that had been possible. And so, in the passage now under consideration, he wants his readers to know that what he is about to say is prefaced by a sincere prayer to God for those who have rejected God's plan for saving the lost. This reminds us of the words of Samuel which he spoke to the Israelites when they rejected God and demanded a human king. "Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against Jehovah in ceasing to pray for you: but I will instruct you in the good and the right way." (1 Sam. 12: 23.) Elders, preachers, and other teachers in the Lord's church should always remember to manifest this spirit when they are called upon to present some unpleasant truths to others.

Paul well understood the attitude of the unbelieving Jews, because as they were then, so had he been during the days before his conversion. (Cf. Acts 7: 54-8: 3; 9: 1ff; Gal. 1: 13-23; Phil. 3: 6.) If zeal alone had been sufficient, Paul and all of his unbelieving brethren would have

been saved; but zeal which is acceptable to God must be tempered with knowledge. Zeal without knowledge invariably leads one into error; and people in this kind of a situation not only fail to obey God; they actually reject his commandments. (Cf. Mark 7: 7-9.) Zeal without knowledge frequently causes well-meaning people to injure those who are themselves innocent of any wrongdoing. J. Roy Vaughan points out that which we all know to be true when he says, "This is often demonstrated when brethren rush into print and pulpit and condemn what they believe to be the practice of other brethren, and later find that they are mistaken about the matter. They not only harm themselves, but they harm their brother in the Lord." The Holy Spirit has seen fit to record many examples of this unfortunate practice of allowing zeal to function without knowledge. (Cf. Acts 21: 17ff; 26: 9ff; Josh. 22: 10.) In the words of Julius Bate, "Zeal without knowledge is like fire without a grate to contain it; like a sword without a hilt to wield it by; like a high-bred horse without a bridle to guide him. It speaks without thinking, acts without planning, seeks to accomplish a good end without the adoption of becoming mean." While on the other hand, zeal with knowledge causes people to be careful not to go beyond that which is written. (Cf. 1 Cor. 4: 6; 2 John 9; Matt 7: 21-23.)

The righteousness of God about which Paul is here speaking is the righteousness which is revealed in the gospel (Rom. 1: 16, 17), while their own righteousness was that which they sought to attain by keeping the law. Paul himself had tried that very thing before his conversion, as may be seen by reading Phil. 3: 4-6. In verse 9 of that same chapter he says, "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." This, of course, was after he became a Christian, and it shows the difference between one's own righteousness and that which is from God. This danger of seeking one's own righteousness by following his own way of thinking is just as potent today, as it was in Paul's time, whether one is in the church or out

of it. (Cf. Isa. 55: 8, 9.) No one can ever please the Lord by anything less than the faithful following of that which has been spoken through the Holy Spirit. (See Gal. 1: 6-10.)

The expression "For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth" is one of the few expressions in the New Testament which is susceptible of either of two meanings, both of which are true. The term "end" could signify either termination or purpose, or both. We know that Christ terminated the law when he died upon the cross, as the golden text plainly states; and we also know that the end, that is, the aim or purpose of the law was righteousness. But when it was demonstrated that imperfect human beings could not keep a perfect law, it was then revealed that the righteousness which the law would have given, had it been kept, can be found only in Christ. (Cf. Gal. 2: 21; 3: 10-14.) The law ended with the death of Christ for every one, whether believer or unbeliever, but it appears that whatever the apostle was writing about in the verse now before us concerned believers only. "For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth." This probably was intended to show that the aim of the law is fulfilled in Christ. (Cf. Gal. 3: 24.)

The Nearness of Christ and His Salvation (Rom. 10: 5-10)

For Moses writeth that the man that doeth the righteousness which is of the law shall live thereby. The reference here is to that which Moses said in Lev. 18: 5: "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and mine ordinances; which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am Jehovah." This was Paul's authority for saying that the righteousness of the law had to be achieved by perfect obedience. But that was something which no human being had ever done, or could do, and the result was that the law only emphasized sin and demonstrated the need for a Saviour. (See Rom. 7: 13.) Phillips renders the verse now under consideration in these words: "Moses writes of righteousness-by-the-Law when he says that the man who perfectly obeys

the Law shall find life in it—which is theoretically right but impossible in practice.”

But the righteousness which is of faith saith thus, Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down:) or, Who shall descend into the abyss? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead.) This statement is based on that which Moses said as he was concluding his third discourse to the children of Israel, just before his death. After speaking the words of the law to them, he said, “For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not too hard for thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.” (Deut. 30: 11-14.)

Those who are familiar with the writings of Paul are aware of the fact that he frequently quotes from the Old Testament scriptures, and that he often adapts that which he quotes to whatever question he may have before him. (Cf. Heb. 13: 5, 6; Deut. 31: 6; Josh. 1: 5.) Regarding the subject now before us, Paul evidently meant to show that there was no further need for miraculous manifestations, so far as the gospel itself is concerned. And with this in mind, he personified the righteousness which is by faith, and allowed that righteousness to warn against insisting that Christ be brought down from heaven, or raised up from the dead, in order that the unbelieving Jews might accept him. The gospel had already been fully established. (Cf. 1 Cor. 15: 1-4; Rom. 1: 4.) There is therefore no further excuse for a failure to believe and obey it.

But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach: because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with

the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

In making the application of the words of Moses, Paul is saying to the Jews that the righteousness which is by faith does not involve any painful search or laborious work on the part of those who desire it. Christ has already accomplished all that is essential to salvation; and all that is necessary is to accept by faith that which the gospel declares, instead of the long and painful, as well as futile, way of trying to establish one's own righteousness by obedience to the law. The two essential things, so far as people are concerned, are faith in the heart and confession with the mouth. Faith, of course, is to be understood in its comprehensive sense, that of putting into action that which is required of the believer. (Cf. John 3: 36; James 2: 14-26.) This is what Paul means by “obedience of faith,” with which he begins and closes the epistle to the Romans. (1: 5; 16: 26.)

The term “confess” literally means to say the same thing, to acknowledge as true that which has been affirmed. God has declared that Jesus is his Son, and when we confess him we are acknowledging that to be true, or are saying the same thing. While one must always confess his faith in Christ before he is a fit subject for baptism, the Bible nowhere teaches that a formal confession, as such, is required of any one. Even the King James Version of Acts 8 shows that the eunuch was revealing the state of his heart to Philip, in response to that which the evangelist said to him. (See Acts 8: 36ff.) Any one who makes known by word of mouth his faith in Jesus, having repented of his sins, is a proper subject for baptism; but we should remember that that is not the only time and place for the confession of our faith in Christ. (Cf. Heb. 10: 23; 13: 15.) There will be many times in the life of a Christian when he will have the opportunity to confess the name of Christ. (Cf. John 12: 42, 43.)

The Promise of Salvation Is for All
(Rom. 10: 11-15)

For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be put to shame. For there is no dis-

inction between Jew and Greek: for the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon him: for, Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

The "scripture" referred to here by Paul is Isa. 28: 16 (cf. Rom. 9: 33), and it is interesting to observe that the apostle changes it from the singular "he" to the universal "who-soever," and it is upon this point that the whole of his argument turns. Any one who believes on Christ will do that which he says (cf. Luke 6: 46); and when that is done, he will never have it said of him that he has been put to shame. The Lord will never be ashamed of any faithful child of God. (See Matt. 10: 32, 33; Mark 8: 38; Heb. 2: 11; 1 John 2: 28; Rev. 3: 5.) Paul announces the same truth here that Peter did in Acts 10: 34, 35, namely that "God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him." To "fear" is to reverence God or have the proper respect for him, while to "work righteousness" is to do that which he commands. (Psalm 119: 172; Matt. 3: 15.) To "call upon the name of the Lord" is to do as he directs (Acts 22: 16); for it is evident from Matt. 7: 21-23; 25: 11, 12 that a mere calling the name of the Lord will not suffice. The quotation which Paul makes in verse 13 is from Joel 2: 32 (cf. Acts 2: 21), and it is again interesting to note that Paul changes from "Jehovah" (God) to "Lord" (Jesus), which implies,

of course, that the apostle regards the Son as possessing "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2: 9).

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? even as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things!

The questions which Paul asks in the verses just quoted are rhetorical, and they require a negative answer. The reference to being unable to preach without being sent is to the original proclamation of the gospel, a thing which no uninspired man could do. (See 1 Cor. 2: 6-10.) It is, of course, a perversion of this scripture to try to make it mean that no one today can preach unless some one, or some church sends him. It is also a misuse of the passage to endeavor to make it imply that no one can hear, that is, learn the truth without a preacher. Inspired preaching was necessary in order to have the gospel message made known to men; but now that it has been reduced to writing, anyone, with even limited ability, can study it and learn the will of the Lord. (Cf. John 7: 17; Matt. 13: 12.) The quotation regarding the feet of them who bring glad tidings of good things is from Isa. 52: 7; and the idea is that since the bearer of the message had to travel by foot, the feet were exalted as the objects of praise.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What is the best way to understand a given passage of scripture? Give reasons for your answer.
Show how this is true of our lesson for today.
Why did Paul write to the Romans regarding the rejection of the Jews?

The Golden Text

Why was the law of Moses given to the Jews?
What effect did that have on the Gentiles?
How do we know that God never intended that the law be a permanent rule for his people?
Under what circumstances did Paul write the words of the golden text?
In the light of these facts, why do some

people still insist on living under the law?

The Manner in Which the Jews Missed the Way

What was Paul's attitude toward the unbelieving Jews?
Why was he so interested in their welfare?
What lesson should we learn from this?
What special preparation did Paul have for dealing with the rebellious Israelites?
Why is zeal without knowledge so dangerous?
What is the value of zeal with knowledge?
What is the righteousness of God in our lesson for today?
What did Paul mean by the Jews' "own righteousness"?
In what way may people today attempt to establish their own righteousness?
In what sense is Christ the "end" of the law to every one who believes?

The Nearness of Christ and His Salvation
 What did Moses say about the righteousness which is of the law?
 What does Paul say that the righteousness which is by faith warns against?
 Why was this true?
 What use did Paul make of the words of Moses in this respect?
 How does he apply the statement of Moses to the unbelieving Jews?
 In what sense does the apostle use the terms "faith" and "believe" in this passage?
 What is the place of "confession" in the gospel plan of salvation?

The Promise of Salvation Is for All
 Discuss Paul's use of the Old Testament scriptures in proving his point here?
 What will any believer in Christ always do?
 In what sense will he not be ashamed?
 Why is God no respecter of persons or the same to both Jews and Greeks?
 What does it mean to call upon the name of the Lord?
 What is the nature of the questions which Paul asks in verses 14, 15?
 In what sense is it true that one must be sent in order to preach?
 Is it possible for one to hear today without a preacher? Give reasons for your answer.

Lesson VII—May 19, 1963

CIVIL DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS

Lesson Text

Rom. 13: 1-10

1 Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God.

2 Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God; and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment.

3 For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And wouldest thou have no fear of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise from the same:

4 For he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil.

5 Wherefore ye must needs be in subjection, not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

6 For for this cause ye pay tribute also; for they are ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing.

7 Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

8 Owe no man anything, save to love one another: for he that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law.

9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: love therefore is the fulfilment of the law.

DEVOTIONAL READING. —Rom. 13: 11-14.

GOLDEN TEXT. — "Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." (1 Pet. 2: 13.)

Daily Bible Readings

- May 13. M. Show Respect for Authorities (2 Pet. 2: 9-22)
- May 14. T. Obey Civil Ordinances (1 Pet. 2: 13-17)
- May 15. W. Speak Not Evil of Rulers (Acts 23: 1-5)
- May 16. T. Citizenship of Paul (Acts 21: 37-40)
- May 17. F. Paul's Use of His Citizenship (Acts 22: 22-30)
- May 18. S. Collection of Taxes (Luke 3: 12-14)
- May 19. S. Citizens of Heaven (Phil. 3: 17-11)

TIME. — A.D. 58.

PLACE. —Romans was written from Corinth.

PERSONS. — Paul and the Roman Christians.

Introduction

Those who accept the doctrine of the all-sufficiency of the revelation which God has made concerning his Son are fully convinced that his people have the needed information in the Bible, and especially in the New Testament, to enable them to act according to the divine will in all of the relations of life. This is precisely the claim which the New Testament itself makes, as may be seen by reading the following passages. "Every scripture inspired of God is also 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, 17.) "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." (2 Pet. 1: 3.)

It is also true that the Lord expects his people to live the Christian life in the world, in every place in which they may chance to be. When Jesus prayed for his disciples on the night before he went to the cross, he included this petition: "I have given them thy word; and the world hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take

them from the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (John 17:

14-16). Not only does the Lord want his people to live their lives among their fellow men, he also wants them to exercise an influence for good upon them. (Cf. Matt. 5: 13-16.) Such influence can be exerted only by living as the Lord directs, in all of life's relationships.

With the foregoing facts before us, it will have to be admitted that the Lord has revealed to his people through the Holy Spirit that which he wants them to know regarding their duties toward civil governments, or he has not. If he has left this area of our lives to be determined by human reason and the demands of the times, then the inspired scriptures do not furnish us with a complete guide for all of our duties; for no one can deny that Christians have duties toward the powers that be. Thoughtful people, of course, will not say that the New Testament is insufficient for all of our needs. Therefore, if every one will simply maintain an open mind and a sincere desire to learn and to do that which is unquestionably the will of the Lord, there will be no doubt about the result. (Cf. John 7: 17; Matt. 13: 12.)

The Golden Text

"Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." It will be much easier to see the significance of this statement, if it is studied in the light of its context. In the preceding verses, Peter gives this admonition: "Beloved, I beseech you as sojourners and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your behavior seemly among the Gentiles; that, wherein they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." (1 Pet. 2: 11, 12.) Thayer defines the original word for "sojourner" as follows: "2. in the Scriptures a *stranger, foreigner, one who lives in a place without the rights of citizenship*; of Christians, whose fatherland is heaven, 1 Pet. 2: 11." See Acts 7: 6,

29; Eph. 2: 19 where the same original word occurs; cf. Gen. 15: 13.

Thayer also defines the original word for "pilgrim" to mean "one who comes from a foreign country into a city or land to reside there by the side of the natives: hence *strangers; sojourning in a strange place, a foreigner*; in the N. T. metaph: in ref. to heaven as the native country, *one who sojourns on earth*: so of Christians, 1 Pet. 1: 1; joined with [sojourners], 1 Pet. 2: 11; cf. 1: 17." See Heb. 11: 13 where the same original words occur; cf. Gen. 23: 3. Christians are citizens of a kingdom; and as such, they owe their allegiance, first and foremost, to him who is their king, even Jesus. They are sojourners and pilgrims here among men.

With these facts before us, we

should carefully read the paragraph which begins with the words of the golden text: "Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as sent by him for vengeance on evil-doers and for praise to them that do well. For so is the will of God, that by well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your freedom for a cloak of wickedness, but as bond-

servants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king." (1 Pet. 2: 13-17.) This is enough to show that God expects his people to be obedient to all the laws under which they live; and that the motive which prompts such obedience is "for the Lord's sake." If Christians are always moved in their relationship to their government by this consideration, they can be reasonably sure that they are doing the right thing.

The Text Explained

The Christian's Relation to Civil Governments (Rom. 13: 1-5)

Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God. This is one of the clearest statements on record regarding the origin of and authority for civil governments. It is true that God allows people to have their own ways in many things, and especially in the matter of setting up the form of government which they want; but there is one thing of which we may always be certain, namely, he has never removed himself from these powers that be. This truth was clearly stated by Daniel in these words: "The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones; to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the lowest of men." (Dan. 4: 17.) One needs only to read the Book of Revelation in order to see that the same principle will always be in operation. God's providence embraces nations, as well as individuals.

The formation of human governments is essential for the preservation of the moral order of society, and even for the existence of the kingdom of God itself here upon the earth. No thoughtful person can visualize an orderly maintenance of the church in the midst of anarchy. It is difficult enough for it to survive in those countries where the state is opposed to it, or even unfriendly; but if there were no human law and order for the people who comprise that area, the work of maintaining

the kingdom of Christ would be well-nigh impossible. It is easy to see therefore why Christians are not at liberty to revolt against whatever government they may be subject to, or under which they live. Whatever the character of the state, it is of God (cf. Isa. 10: 5ff), and the Christian is under obligation to recognize its divine right in the persons and requirements in which it is presented to him, so says the apostle Paul in the passage now under consideration.

Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment. For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. 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. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

This is one of the clearest statements in the New Testament, or, perhaps it would be better to say that it is one of the longest statements in God's word, regarding the attitude of Christians toward the governments under which they live. When Paul wrote these words, he had in mind the Roman government; and it is interesting to note that the tyrant Nero was on the throne. And he was still on the throne when Paul urged Timothy to offer "supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, . . . for kings and all that are in high place; that we may lead a tranquil and

quiet life in all godliness and gravity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." (See 1 Tim. 2: 1-4.)

Some people are of the opinion that Paul would not have written these things, if the great persecutions of Christians under the Roman rulers had already begun; but such an idea impeaches the mind and will of the Holy Spirit who inspired his message. It is certain that God knew what was coming, and the text plainly says that "he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment" that is, condemnation. Furthermore, Jesus had already been crucified as a malefactor, and Paul himself was frequently in conflict with the law as a disturber of the peace; but all of that was due to temporary misuses of the law. Even Jesus told Pilate that he would have had no power against him, unless it had been given to him from above. (See John 19: 11.) This should be enough to show that persecution and injustices in the name of the law would not have caused Paul to write otherwise regarding the divine sanction and purpose of civil government.

The statement that "rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil," may cause some to wonder about it in the light of the bitter persecutions which some rulers waged against the Lord's people. We may not be able to understand why many of those things were so; but we do know that great trials have a purifying effect upon the righteous, while giving the wicked the opportunity of demonstrating their attitude, so that they may be without excuse before God in the last day. But if and when evil rulers demand of Christians something which is contrary to the will of the Lord, they are not only not under obligation to comply with it; they are positively taught to obey God rather than men. (See Acts 4: 18-20; 5: 27-29.) Later on, when Peter wrote his first epistle, he said, "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be zealous of that which is good? But even if ye should suffer for righteousness' sake, blessed are ye: and fear not their fear, neither be troubled; 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: 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. For it is better, if the will of God should so will, that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing." (1 Pet. 3: 13-17.)

The statement, "But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil," is understood by many Bible students as referring to the divine authority for capital punishment; and in view of the general teaching of the Bible on the subject, there can be little doubt about the correctness of the position. (Cf. Gen. 9: 6.) However, it should always be remembered that the infliction of such punishment is always the function of the state, and not of the individual. In commenting on the verse now before us, Vincent notes that the sword is "borne as the symbol of the magistrate's right to inflict capital punishment. Thus Ulpian: 'They who rule whole provinces have the right of the sword (*jus gladii*).' The Emperor Trajan presented to a provincial governor, on starting for his province, a dagger, with the words, 'For me. If I deserve it, in me.'" Verse 5 assigns the two motives for being in subjection to the powers that be, namely, fear of punishment and for conscience' sake.

The Christian's Obligation to Support the State (Rom. 13: 6, 7)

For for this cause ye pay tribute also; for they are ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing. Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

The duties which this section of our lesson requires of Christians must be discharged as a matter of conscience. Alford cites a remark by Tertullian to the effect that what the Romans lost by the Christians refusing to bestow gifts on their temples, they gained by their con-

scientious payment of taxes. Conscientious people, who have been properly taught, are nearly always thoroughly dependable. Sir Richard Steele has observed that "conscience, honor, and credit, are all in our interest; and without the concurrence of the former, the latter are but impositions upon ourselves and others." It was Jesus who said, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's;" and no man can be pleasing unto the heavenly Father who refuses to order his life accordingly.

The terms "tribute" and "customs" have a place in the lives of most people. *Tribute* is the tax which they pay for themselves, while *custom* is the tax which they pay on goods. Vincent expresses the matter in this way: "Tribute on persons: custom on goods." Today we have many kinds of taxes, both direct and indirect; both out in the open and hidden. Most American taxpayers are familiar with the statement of Mr. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, in which he said, "Taxes are what we pay for civilized society. . . ." Edmund Burke noted that "taxing is an easy business.—Any projector can contrive new impositions; any bungler can add to the old; but is it altogether wise to have no other bounds to your impositions than the patience of those who are to bear them?" The French philosopher Montesquieu said that "as a general rule in constitutional states liberty is a compensation for the heaviness of taxation, and in despotic states the equivalent for liberty is the lightness of taxation."

But when the taxes are properly levied, the conscientious Christian will promptly pay them; and even if they are improperly levied, he will endeavor to do the right thing about them. Edward Gibbon, in his *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, points out that one of the five major causes of the fall of the empire was "higher and higher taxes, until the load became unbearable, while officials of the empire continued to spend public funds with reckless indifference." If we did not know that the great historian of another day said that, his statement might well be thought of as an item from a modern book or one of our daily papers. Paul, of course, had

in mind governments which are functioning as they should, and his inspired teaching obligates conscientious Christians to render to all their dues, whether it be taxes or proper respect.

Love Is the Perfect Motive for All of
Our Relationships
(Rom. 13: 8-10)

Owe no man anything, save to love one another: for he that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.

The idea here seems to be against making a debt or obligation which one cannot or will not pay, such as money or moral debts. If a man borrows money, buys something on time, or makes a promise to do something, and then discharges his obligation in keeping with his word, it does not appear that he owes anything in the sense that Paul here prohibits. In other words, Christians are forbidden to make obligations which they cannot or will not fulfill. Of course, it sometimes happens that circumstances make it impossible for one to do as he promised, and as he fully intended to do; and if and when that happens, he should immediately get in touch with his creditor or the one to whom he is obligated, and do his best to make satisfactory arrangements.

There is, however, one debt which every Christian should incur, and that is the debt of love. This debt involves more than any other which one can make, and it is also one which he can never fully pay. This is because love is a principle of living which can never be exhausted. No one who adopts this rule of living will ever be able to say, I have done all that I am supposed to do, and there is nothing more for me to undertake. This way of living embraces all law and goes beyond it; and it would be, if we were able to fulfil it, the complete realization of the perfect life.

No law, not even the Ten Com-

mandments, can cause a loveless man to want to do right. That is the reason that the civil authorities have to have the sword, and that is the reason that no man was ever justified by law in the sight of God. But when a person beholds the love of God in the gift of his Son for the sins of the world, and yields himself to him in obedience to the gospel, it is then that he begins to learn the meaning of love (1 John 4: 19). And then when he adopts love as the principle of his life, he will make every effort to fulfil the demands of the law, not because the law requires it, but because his rule of life is motivated by a higher principle—that of love. Love can and does change duty into delightful service; and it is only when love is absent that law and duty are necessary.

How sweet, how heav'nly, is the sight,
When those that love the Lord
In one another's peace delight,
And so fulfil the word.
When each can feel his brother's sigh,
And with him bear a part;
When sorrow flows from eye to eye,
And joy from heart to heart.
When, free from envy, scorn, and pride,
Our wishes all above,
Each can his brother's failings hide,
And show a brother's love.
Love is the golden chain that binds
The happy souls above;
And he's an heir of heav'n who finds
His bosom glow with love.

—J. Swain

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What is implied in the doctrine of the all-sufficiency of God's revelation to men?
What claim does the New Testament itself make regarding this?
Where does the Lord expect his people to live the Christian life?
What bearing do the foregoing facts have on our particular lesson for today?

The Golden Text

Why is it essential to study a given passage in the light of its context?
State the facts in the setting of this golden text.
What does the New Testament mean by saying that Christians are sojourners and pilgrims?
What motive is given for their obeying the laws of the land?

The Christian's Relation to Civil Governments

What lessons do we learn from the first verse of the lesson text?
What principle has God always followed with reference to human governments?
Why are human governments necessary?
What are some uses which God makes of them?
What attitude are Christians required to maintain toward civil governments?

Does this apply only to the ones we like? Give reasons for your answer.
What effect do persecutions and injustices have on this principle of loyalty?
What is the function of rulers toward good and evil?
What is the duty of Christians if they are called upon to go contrary to God's will?
What should be their attitude if they are called upon to suffer for righteousness' sake?
What motives are assigned in verse 5 for Christians' being in subjection to governments?

The Christian's Obligation to Support the State

In what way does Paul apply the motive of conscientiousness?
What is nearly always true of conscientious people?
What is the Christian attitude toward governmental taxation?
Why are such taxes essential?

Love Is the Perfect Motive for All of Our Relationships

In what sense must Christians not owe anything?
Why is it never possible to pay the debt of love?
What, then, is the debt of love?
What is the relation, in this respect, between law and love?
What is the greatest motivating power for the child of God?
Show how love is the fulfilment of the law.

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He that does good for good's sake, seeks neither praise nor reward, but he is sure of both in the end. —Wm. Penn.

Lesson VIII—May 26, 1963

MUTUAL HELPFULNESS COMMANDED

Lesson Text

Rom. 15: 14-16, 22-33

14 And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

15 But I write the more boldly unto you in some measure, as putting you again in remembrance, because of the grace that was given me of God,

16 That I should be a minister of Christ Je'-sus unto the Gen'-tiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gen'-tiles might be made acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

22 Wherefore also I was hindered these many times from coming to you:

23 But now, having no more any place in these regions, and having these many years a longing to come unto you,

24 Whensoever I go unto Spain (for I hope to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first in some measure I shall have been satisfied with your company)—

25 But now, I say, I go unto Je-ru'-sa-lem, ministering unto the saints.

26 For it hath been the good pleasure of Mac-e-do'-ni-a and A-cha'-ia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints that are at Je-ru'-sa-lem.

27 Yea, it hath been their good pleasure; and their debtors they are. For if the Gen'-tiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they owe it to them also to minister unto them in carnal things.

28 When therefore I have accomplished this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will go on by you unto Spain.

29 And I know that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ.

30 Now I beseech you, brethren, by our Lord Je'-sus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;

31 That I may be delivered from them that are disobedient in Judae'-a, and that my ministration which I have for Je-ru'-sa-lem may be acceptable to the saints;

32 That I may come unto you in joy through the will of God, and together with you find rest.

33 Now the God of peace be with you all. A-men'.

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rom. 15: 1-13.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased(Heb. 13: 16.)

Daily Bible Readings

- May 20. M. Bearing Burdens (Gal. 6: 1-10)
- May 21. T. Ministering to the Needy (Luke 10: 25-37)
- May 22. W. Pure Religion and Undeified (James 1: 26, 27)
- May 23. T. Exhortation Required (Heb. 3: 12-19; 10: 25-28)
- May 24. F. Christ Our Example (Matt. 20: 28; 1 Pet. 2: 21)
- May 25. S. Golden Rule (Luke 6: 31)
- May 26. S. Duties of Christ's Disciples (Luke 6: 32-38)

TIME.—A.D. 58.

PLACE.—Romans was written from Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Roman Christians.

Introduction

The chapter from which our lesson for today is taken begins with these words: “Now we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the

weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each one of us please his neighbor for that which is good, unto edifying. For Christ also pleased

not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell upon me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope. Now the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of the same mind one with another according to Christ Jesus: that with one accord ye may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, even as Christ also received you, to the glory of God." (Rom. 15: 1-7.)

The verses just quoted should be read in the light of chapter fourteen, in which Paul discusses at length the attitude which the strong should maintain toward the weak. This kind of attitude is based on the law of love, rather than on the principle of selfishness. When people think of the welfare of others instead of their own selfish desires, they are in reality benefiting themselves as well as their fellow men. No one can try to build someone else up, without growing taller himself; and no one can sprinkle the perfume of happiness upon others, without getting some of it on himself. The strong have an obligation toward the weaker brethren,

and they have the example of Christ to show them how they should go about discharging this duty.

But the lesson now before us is one of mutual helpfulness, and that implies that every Christian is under obligation to do what he can in the interest of other brethren, as the opportunity may present itself to him. It frequently happens that the weaker brother feels that there is nothing that he can do for the stronger; and likewise the stronger sometimes feels that there is nothing which the weaker one can do for him; all of which reminds us of the fable of the lion and the mouse. The lion was accustomed to taking his nap in the sunshine, and the mouse enjoyed running over the lion while he was sleeping. This annoyed the lion, and so one day he caught the mouse and was about to crush it to death with his great paw. The little mouse begged for mercy, and promised that he would do what he could to help the lion if and when he got into trouble. This greatly amused the lion; for what could a little mouse do to help him! But one day the lion was caught in a rope trap, and it was then that the mouse gnawed the rope into and freed the mighty lion!

The Golden Text

"But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." This passage is taken from a group of exhortations (Heb. 13: 7-17) which the writer of Hebrews gave his readers regarding stability in Christian doctrine and practice. The word "but" with which the golden text begins indicates a contrast between that verse and the one which precedes it. The two together read as follows: "Through him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." The point in the contrast is this: it is good to praise God, but that in and of itself is not enough; we must also honor him by doing good to our fellow men. (Cf. 1 John 3: 17, 18.)

The verse which serves as our golden text for today is rendered in The New English Bible in these

words: "And never forget to show kindness and to share what you have with others; for such are the sacrifices which God approves." The term "communicate" carries with it the idea of generosity, fellow-feeling, altruism (Arndt-Gingrich), and implies that the one who so acts is guided by an ethical principle which recognizes that the welfare of others is exalted above that of self, thus showing that the person in question is free from selfishness. This is precisely the sentiment which Paul expresses in the first part of Romans 15, as already pointed out. When Christians show kindness to others and share with them that which they have, they are offering sacrifices to God, along with the praise of their lips, which are pleasing to him.

Milligan points out three reasons why these sacrifices are well pleasing to God. (1) They are in harmony with his own nature and administration. He opens his hand liberally and supplies the needs of

every living creature. (Cf. Psalm 145: 16.) When Paul urged upon the Corinthians the need for benevolent giving (2 Cor. 9: 9), he quoted from Psalm 112: 9 these words: "He hath scattered abroad, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness abideth for ever." (2) They indicate in us a state of mind and heart which is pleasing to God; provided they are proceeding from proper motives (cf. Acts 5: 1-11). Jesus says in Matt. 25: 31-46 that our characters will be

tested by this law of benevolence in the day of judgment. (3) They are beneficial to others. "For the ministration of this service not only filleth up the measure of the wants of the saints, but aboundeth also through many thanksgivings unto God." (2 Cor. 9: 12.) A great change would soon be wrought in society, concludes Milligan, if all Christians would but act faithfully as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (See 1 Pet. 4: 10.)

The Text Explained

Paul's Motive for Writing to the
Romans

(Rom. 15: 14-16)

And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. But I write the more boldly unto you in some measure, as putting you again in remembrance, because of the grace that was given me of God, that I should be a minister of Christ Jesus unto the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be made acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

After finishing the doctrinal portion of the epistle to the Romans, Paul devotes most of chapters 12, 13, 14, and the first thirteen verses of chapter 15, to exhortations. Verse 14 of chapter 15 begins what may very properly be called the epilogue of the epistle. If one should look at chapter 14 alone, he might reach the conclusion that the apostle considered the Roman brethren quite defective either in intelligence or love, or both; but as he begins this part of the epistle he disclaims any such inference from that which went before. On the contrary, he told the brethren that he was persuaded, that is, convinced or certain, that they were upright and fully prepared to admonish one another. This was evidently Paul's view of the church as a whole. (Cf. the list of names he cites in chapter 16.)

It is always in the interest of progress for preachers and other teachers to encourage their hearers when it is possible for them to do so. It often happens that teaching is placed on a critical level, which means that those who are the recipients of the

instruction are put on the defensive. This, of course, is sometimes necessary; and one only needs to read Second Corinthians in order to see how well Paul could show the brethren their faults. But in writing to the Roman brethren, Paul was addressing a group of Christians who, for the most part apparently, were in a state of spiritual vigor and maturity. And it is possible, too, as Moule points out, that he expresses this conviction the more strongly, because he was writing to the church in the imperial metropolis, the mighty center of influence.

But Paul's principal reason for writing more boldly was due to the commission which he received from the Lord to preach to the Gentiles. He frequently speaks of the assignment which was given to him as the grace which was bestowed upon him. (Cf. 1 Cor. 3: 10; 15: 9, 10; Gal. 2: 9; Eph. 3: 7, 8.) We are not to get the idea that Paul meant to leave the impression on the Romans that they already knew all the things about which he had written to them, when he told them that he was putting them again in remembrance; for it is exceedingly doubtful if they had known many of the great doctrinal issues which he discussed. But they did doubtless know much of that which was hortatory. Any teacher of God's word should always strive to make known the divine will to others; and then endeavor constantly to keep them constantly reminded of the thing which they have been taught. (Cf. 2 Pet. 1: 12-15.)

In verse 16 the apostle figuratively compares himself to a priest as he presents an offering to God. The original word for "minister" is not the usual *diakonos* (cf. Eph. 3: 7)

which means servant, but *leitourgos* which denotes a governmental, that is, a public servant (Rom. 13: 6) or a priest (Heb. 8: 2). The word for "ministering" (*ierourgeō*) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and it is defined by Thayer, Arndt-Gingrich, et al to mean to be busied with sacred things, to minister in the manner of a priest, to perform holy service. The marginal reading is *ministering in sacrifice*. The original for "offering up" is *prospora*, and means that which is brought as an offering. Thus Paul pictures himself engaged in the sacred ministry of a priest, as he brings his offering, the Gentiles whom he has converted, to God; and they are made acceptable by being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit inspired the message by which they were converted (cf. John 17: 17), and he took up his abode in them when they were cleansed from sin (Acts 2: 38, 39; 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20); and inasmuch as the Spirit dwells only in sanctified temples and places of worship, his presence in the Gentiles was equivalent to their sanctification. Alford quotes Theophylact as saying of Paul, "This is my priesthood, to preach the gospel. My knife is the word, ye are the sacrifice."

Explanations Regarding His Plans
(Rom. 15: 22-29)

Wherefore also I was hindered these many times from coming to you: but now, having no more any place in these regions, and having these many years a longing to come unto you, whensoever I go unto Spain (for I hope to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first in some measure I shall have been satisfied with your company.)

The imperfect passive ("I was hindered") denotes continuousness, and implies a succession of hindrances (see Vincent, Robertson, et al), as "these many time" further indicate. We do not, of course, know in what all of those hindrances consisted, but from the context it is fair to assume that his preaching obligations in the area where he had labored so long were chief among them. (Cf. Rom. 1: 9-13.) It is also fair to assume from such passages as 1 Thess. 2: 17, 18 that other causes may have been present. Hind-

rances, in and of themselves, are not always hurtful; and if one is willing for the Lord to overrule in such things, they frequently may be turned into blessings. (Cf. Rom. 8: 28; Phil. 1: 12f.) In the words of Mrs. J. M. Hunter,

Tho' many disappointments around
my path may fall,
I'll call them "his apointments," for
he is ruling all.
He notes the smallest sparrow, he
hears his children pray;
And by and by, in mercy, he'll wipe
all tears away.

Paul had been preaching approximately twenty-five years when he wrote the epistles to the Romans, and during that time he had so completely covered the eastern part of the Roman world as to be able to say, "From Jerusalem, and round about even unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ;" and if one will only consult a map, he can easily see what a vast territory he covered. And his work had been so thoroughly done, as to leave him no further place where his services were needed. Some four years later, he wrote to the Colossian brethren to the effect that the gospel had been preached in all creation under heaven. (Col. 1: 23.) If Paul's plan were followed today, with all the modern means of communication, it staggers the imagination as we endeavor to conceive of the results which would be accomplished. It is doubtful if the zeal which Paul manifested during the years he was actively engaged in gospel preaching has ever been equaled; and it is almost certain that it has never been surpassed.

Not only was Paul a great gospel preacher; he also well understood the art of diplomacy, as may be seen by reading his tactful remark in the parenthesis of verse 24. Instead of leaving the impression that he thought it would be a great honor to them to have an apostle in their midst, he wanted them to feel that they were doing him a favor by sharing their Christian experience with him. Almost every one likes to feel that he is appreciated; and if elders, preachers, and other church leaders would learn this lesson and put it into practice, the favorable response from those whom they try to influ-

ence would be much greater. The expression "in some measure" in the parenthesis already referred to probably implies that he was only planning a short visit with them.

But now, I say, I go unto Jerusalem, ministering unto the saints. For it hath been the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints that are at Jerusalem. Yea, it hath been their good pleasure; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they owe it also to minister unto them in carnal things. When therefore I have accomplished this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will go on by you unto Spain. And I know that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ.

As Paul thought on the prospects of his proposed labors in Spain and the blessings of a visit with the Roman brethren, he realized that there was one thing which made an early trip to those places impossible, namely, the journey to Jerusalem with the money which some of the Gentile churches had collected for the poor among the Jerusalem Christians. For many months Paul, along with other faithful brethren, had been urging some of the Gentile Christians to take up a collection for the needy saints in Judaea. Many of the early Jewish brethren in the homeland had never been entirely satisfied with the way in which Paul and his co-laborers had offered the gospel to the Gentiles; and the growing strength of the Gentile churches seemed only to increase their suspicion.

It had long been Paul's conviction that this feeling of resentment on the part of the Jewish brethren could, in a large degree at least, be allayed by getting the Gentile brethren to supply funds to relieve the needs of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem and that immediate area. And as Paul was wont to do, as the text now under consideration plainly shows, he presented the matter so that both the Jews and the Gentiles were made to feel that each was simply discharging an obligation which was owed to the other, as indeed was the case. One of the great needs today among the Lord's people is that of

proper motivation. When people are made to realize the reason why something should be done, and are made to see that that is what the Lord wants done, it is much easier to get them to respond to whatever is being urged upon them. But when people are allowed to think that there is no great importance attached to that which they are called upon to do, their interest in the proposition will not be very great.

But the clearest evidence of the importance which Paul attached to the collection which was made for the needy saints in Jerusalem was the fact that he deferred his trip to Rome and Spain, in order to go in person with the chosen messengers to carry the money to those for whom it was intended. (Cf. 1 Cor. 16:

1-4.) This can only mean that the apostle felt that the success of his effort would depend upon the interpretation which the bearers put upon the gift when it was delivered in Jerusalem—whether it was just so much cash received, or whether it was a great symbol of fraternal fellowship from the Gentile Christians in other provinces of the Roman Empire. If the wrong interpretation had been placed upon the gift, it certainly would have failed in its conciliatory purpose. This is a lesson which should be well learned and faithfully put into practice today; for it is always true that the gift without the giver is bare.

A Request for Prayer and a Benediction (Rom. 15: 30-33)

Now I beseech you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that are disobedient in Judaea, and that my ministration which I have for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints; that I may come to you in joy through the will of God, and together with you find rest. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

John Wesley notes that he who would have others pray for him, must himself be a man of prayer; and if one will take the time and make the effort, it will be easy for him to see that Paul frequently requested the prayers of others in his

behalf. (Cf. Eph. 6: 18-20; Col. 4: 2-4; 1 Thess. 5: 25; Heb. 13: 18, 19.) The term "strive" implies a strenuous effort, or, which is the same thing, earnest prayer. The Roman brethren were fellow Christians with Paul; and if they realized that fact, it would, of course, be a joy for them to unite their prayers with his in the great work which he was doing, and for his safety.

Paul knew how the Judaizers felt toward him, and he realized that it was possible that prejudice on the part of otherwise faithful brethren might cause them to reject the gift which he was taking to them, and thus the whole effort for which he had labored so long would be brought

to failure. Paul's whole purpose in writing the epistle to the Romans was to bring about peace between the Jews and Gentiles; and now if he can get the Roman brethren to join with him in prayer for the success of this visible effort which he was making, that would be a great factor in the ultimate outcome. Furthermore, no one can pray for another person and the cause which he espouses, without having an interest in both; and if Paul was successful with his mission to Jerusalem, he then felt that he could go to Rome "in joy through the will of God," and together with his brethren there find rest. It was to that end that he himself prayed.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today's lesson?
Repeat the golden text.
Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Under what circumstances did Paul exhort the Roman brethren to mutual helpfulness?
What is the underlying motive for such an attitude?
Discuss some of the benefits which result from mutual helpfulness.
How do the stronger and the weaker brethren often feel toward each other?

The Golden Text

Discuss the setting of our golden text for today.
What emphasis should be put on the term "but" with which it begins?
What does it mean "to do good and to communicate"?
What are some of the basic reasons for this kind of service?

Paul's Motive for Writing to the Romans

Why did Paul write the Roman brethren as he did?
What was his over-all view of the Christians there?
What place does encouragement have in one's general teaching program?
What did Paul say about the commission which he received from the Lord?
Of what was he seeking to put the Roman brethren in remembrance?
What two things should Christian teachers always strive to do?
Under what figure did Paul describe his work among the Gentiles?
In what sense was the offering which he presented sanctified by the Holy Spirit?

Explanations Regarding His Plans

In what way did Paul indicate his reason for not going to Rome sooner?
What were some of the hindrances which he encountered?
What should be the Christian's attitude toward such things?
What is the relation of the providence of God in such matters?
How extensive had Paul's preaching career been up to this time?
How do you account for such great activity on his part?
What encouragement should we receive from his example?
What important lesson is suggested in the parenthesis of verse 14?
What reason did Paul assign for the delay in his visit to Rome?
Why did he want the Gentile Christians to contribute to the relief of the Jewish brethren?
How did he endeavor to make each group feel toward the other with reference to it?
What important lesson should we learn from this?
Why did Paul feel that he should go to Jerusalem with the offering?
What benefit may we get from his example in this respect?

A Request for Prayer and a Benediction

Why did Paul want the Roman brethren to pray for him?
What example did he himself set with reference to this matter?
What does it mean for one to "strive" in prayer?
What effect did Paul think that the success of his mission to Jerusalem would have on his proposed trip to Rome?
Why is it important that Christians pray for each other and for all men?
How did all of this fit into his over-all purpose in writing the Roman letter?



The worst of slaves is he whom passion rules. —*Brooke.*

An honest man is the noblest work of God. —*Pope.*

Lesson IX—June 2, 1963

PAUL WRITES TO THE GALATIAN CHURCHES

Lesson Text

Gal. 1: 1-5, 11-24

1 Paul, an apostle (not from men, neither through man, but through Je'-sus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead),

2 And all the brethren that are with me, unto the churches of Ga-la'-ti-a:

3 Grace to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Je'-sus Christ,

4 "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us out of this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father:

5 To whom be the glory for ever and ever. A-men'.

11 For I make known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man.

12 For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it *came to me* through revelation of Je'-sus Christ.

13 For ye have heard of my manner of life in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and made havoc of it:

14 And I advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of mine own age among my countrymen, being more

exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

15 But when it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, *even* from my mother's womb, and called me through his grace,

16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gen'-tiles; straightway I conferred not with flesh and blood:

17 Neither went I up to Je-ru'-sa-lem to them that were apostles before me: but I went away into A-ra-bi-a; and again I returned unto Da-mas'-cus.

18 Then after three years I went up to Je-ru'-sa-lem to visit Ce'-phas, and tarried with him fifteen days.

19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

20 Now touching the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.

21 Then I came into the regions of Syr'-i-a and Ci-li-ci-a.

22 And I was still unknown by face unto the churches of Ju-dae'-a which were in Christ:

23 But they only heard say, He that once persecuted us now preacheth the faith of which he once made havoc;

24 And they glorified God in me.

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gal. 1: 6-10.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ."* (Gal. 1: 10.)

Daily Bible Readings

May 27. M.	Paul Preaches in Galatia (Acts 16: 6-10)
May 28. T.	Paul Passes through Galatia (Acts 18: 22-28)
May 29. W.	Paul Describes the Galatians as Foolish (Gal. 3: 1-14)
May 30. T.	Galatians Very Unstable (Gal. 1: 6-10)
May 31. F.	Paul Loved the Galatians (Gal. 6: 11-18)
June 1. S.	Galatians Loved Paul (Gal. 4: 12-20)
June 2. S.	Galatians Were Easily Misled (Gal. 4: 9-11)

Time.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Galatians was written from Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Galatian churches.

Introduction

The "churches of Galatia," to which Paul addressed the epistle which we are to study during the remainder of this quarter, were prob-

ably those which he and Barnabas established in Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, during the time of their first great mission-

ary journey. (See Acts, chapters 13 and 14.) These cities were located in the elevated regions of Central Asia Minor, in what the Romans called Galatia. With them, however, the name *Galatia* included additional territory, which lay farther north.

The four cities just named were in South Galatia, and the view which claims that the churches located in them were the "churches of Galatia," to which Paul addressed the letter now under consideration, is known as the South Galatia hypothesis. The view which limits the application of the name *Galatia* to the region of the Asiatic Gauls is known as the North Galatia hypothesis. While Paul's use of the term *Galatia* could have meant the whole of Galatia, or either North or South Galatia, the weight of evidence seems to favor the South Galatia hypothesis, and that is the view which is adopted here. We know that Paul and Barnabas established these churches in South Galatia, while we do not know anything about any others which Paul established in any other part of the region of Galatia; and we know that the geographical location and the historical record of these South Galatian churches blend perfectly with some things which Paul mentions in his letter to the Galatians.

The over-all purpose of the epistle to the Galatians was the emancipation of the gospel from Jewish legalism. It is easy for us to see, with the New Testament before us, that Christianity was a new institution. But many of the Jews of Paul's day, while accepting Christianity of God's

order, still looked upon it as being simply a new chapter in the history of Judaism. This was especially true of the Jews in Palestine. Not possessing the broad outlook which belonged to Paul, these Jews viewed with alarm the possible rapid growth of a church independent of Jewish restrictions; and they were deeply concerned about the future of the temple and the law of Moses. Thus, if this new religion should be allowed to go its way without any consideration for the law of Moses, they evidently reasoned, there was serious danger that the elaborate and splendid temple in Jerusalem would lose its hold on the imaginations of men, and the whole network of Judaism throughout the world would be in immediate jeopardy.

The disintegration of their God-given and time-honored religion, from the viewpoint of these zealous Jews, was unthinkable, and, as they saw the matter, there was only one possible and sensible thing to do, namely, Let every Gentile Christian be circumcised and thereby identify himself with the law of Moses; and he would then be a member of the expanding Jewish-Christian movement which could easily and quickly spread throughout the Roman Empire. In this way both Jews and Gentiles could be included, and both the law and the gospel would be preserved. With this idea firmly fixed in the minds of zealous, if not altogether scrupulous, Judaizers, the internationalization of Christianity was by no means an easy or simple process, as we shall see in the study of the letter which Paul wrote to the Galatians.

The Golden Text

"If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ." These words were spoken in answer to a compound question which Paul had asked in the first part of the verse; and the term "for" with which the verse begins introduces a justification of the severe language which he had just used. The whole setting is as follows: "I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto a different gospel, which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you, and would

pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema. For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? or am I striving to please men? if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ." (Gal. 1: 6-10.)

This language clearly indicates the

kind of slander which Paul's enemies, the *Judaizers*, were circulating against him. They were accusing him of sacrificing the truth of God, in order that he might persuade men. It is true that he had said that he became all things to all men, that he might by all means save some (1 Cor. 9: 19-23); and he had made a concession to the Jews by circumcising Timothy (Acts 16: 1-3) and by recommending certain regulations for the harmonious intercourse between Jews and Gentiles Acts 15: 19-21; 16: 4); but no fair-minded person could construe any of these concessions to mean that he was sacrificing any principle. The second chapter of Galatians clearly shows that he refused to yield on a question of principle under any circumstance. But it was easy for his enemies to misrepresent him, and to make it appear that he was nothing more than a time-server.

The emphasis in verse 10 is on the words *now* and *still*. (Cf. "now" in

verse 9.) It is as if Paul was saying, "I have been charged with conciliating men; but does my language in the preceding verse look like that is what I am doing?" James Mac-knight paraphrases verse 10 in these words: "Having twice denounced destruction to myself and to all others, if we preach contrary to what was first preached to you, *I now ask* those who say I suit my doctrine to the humours of men, *Do I* by this denouncing *make men my friends, or God? Or do I seek to please men? If indeed I still pleased men*, as before my conversion, *I should not be the servant of Christ.*" The Expositor's Greek Testament notes that the subtle irony of the passage is brought out by the word "still." (Cf.

2 Cor. 5: 11 and 1 Thess. 2: 4 for Paul's attitude toward God and men.) It is hardly necessary to say that in the light of what has just been said, our responsibility in this respect is just as great as was that of Paul's.

The Text Explained

Apostolic Address and Greetings

(Gal. 1: 1-5)

Paul, an apostle (not from men, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead), and all the brethren that are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: Grace to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us out of this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father: to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Paul usually, but not always, speaks of himself as an apostle at the beginning of his letters; but in this case there was a special significance attached to the expression. This was due to the fact that the Judaizing agitators had gone among the Galatian churches, and had seriously challenged his right to the title of an apostle. And so, as Paul begins this letter he proceeds on the basis of an emphatic vindication of his divine commission. Some Bible students see in Paul's use of "men" and "man" in the parenthesis of verse 1 as a veiled reference to the charge that he was commissioned by *men* (the church in Antioch, Acts

13: 1-3), and that he received the Spirit through *man* (Ananias, Acts 9: 17) in contrast to the manner in which he came upon the twelve on Pentecost (Acts 2: 1-4). This, however, is not certain. The reference to *men* and *man* may not mean any more than that his apostolic commission was not authorized by *men*, nor was his call to it issued through *man*. His purpose was simply to distinguish himself from false apostles who did not receive their commission from God, and shows that he ranks in every respect with the twelve (Cf. Gal. 2: 6-9.) If this view is correct, then *man* (*men*) does not point to any individual (or individuals), but is (or are) in antithesis to Jesus Christ and God, and may be taken as equal to any man (or men).

We are not told just who the brethren were who were with Paul when he wrote this letter, but it is fair to assume that they were among his intimate fellow workers. A similar reference is made to "the brethren that are with me" in Phil. 4: 21, 22; and it is easy to see that they were distinguished from "all the saints" who were in Rome. Although this letter is characterized by sharp re-

buke, it should be observed that Paul did not withhold his wish for the divine blessings of grace and peace from those whom he was about to upbraid. There was no animosity in the heart of Paul; he was simply filled with righteous indignation.

The affirmation that Christ gave himself for our sins was apparently purposely made in view of the fact that the Galatians had fallen back on the works of the law as a basis for their acceptance with God. The fact that Christ made it possible for our sins to be forgiven and for us to be delivered out of this present evil world, according to God's will, is enough to show that the gospel of Christ, and not the law of Moses, is God's plan for saving the lost in this dispensation. (Cf. Rom. 1: 16, 17; 10: 1-3.) Paul, in verse 5, gives glory to God for the great gift of his love (John 3: 16; Rom. 5: 6-8); but here the greeting ends. In presenting this address and greeting, Paul wove into them the two great propositions which he is about to establish, namely, his own apostolic authority, and the all-sufficient merits of Christ; and how well he succeeded in establishing them, we shall see as we go through the letter. In all his other epistles, Paul follows up his salutation with words of commendation for the faith and good works of his readers; but here he passes on to his intended rebuke. He gives praise only when and where praise is due.

Paul Vindicates His Apostolic Authority

(Gal. 1: 11-17)

For I make known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ. The Galatian Christians had been living the gospel of freedom as Paul had preached it to them (cf. Gal. 5: 1, 7), but during his absence from his enemies had made the most of the situation, and had almost succeeded in turning the Galatians against him. The fact that these Judaizing emissaries gained so great a hold on the churches, which were made up mostly of Gentile Christians, shows something of

their indefatigable activity, as well as their skill in the art of conciliation and persuasion. It should be remembered, however, that they did not hesitate to employ unscrupulous means, when they thought it necessary, in their efforts to gain their end.

It is, indeed, unfortunate that the spirit which these false teachers manifested did not die with them; but, as any observer now knows, the same adroit devices are still being used by some brethren today. It should be obvious to any fair-minded person that when a cause is so weak that its advocates have to work "under cover of darkness" on the unsuspecting and weaker brethren, in order to get a start in their nefarious work of overthrowing churches, that something is wrong. But as long as people are content to allow human nature (which incidentally always remains practically the same) to dictate their activities, these unholy practices will continue. No one who turns his back on human nature (cf. Rom. 6: 1-4; 2 Cor. 5: 17; Tit. 3: 5), and becomes a partaker of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1: 1-11), will resort to such unfair and under-cover tactics.

The Expositor's Greek Testament points out that the verb which is rendered "I make known" has the force of *reminding*, rather than of *making known*; and 1 Cor. 12: 3 and 15: 1 are cited in confirmation of this idea. It is hardly probable, or even possible, that Paul preached to the Galatians without making it plain to them that his message was from God, that is, that he was speaking as an inspired messenger. (Cf. Acts 14: 3, 8ff.) Paul therefore was evidently calling their attention to the truths which they once knew, but had forgotten. The crafty Judaizing teachers had resolved, at the cost of falsehood and detraction, to loosen the hold which the apostle had upon the respect and affections of his converts in Galatia. They not only charged that he was not a genuine apostle; they endeavored to make it appear that he was in opposition to the pillars of the church, who were themselves of the original twelve. (See Gal. 2.) Paul's enemies also asserted, as we have already seen, that he was both inconsistent and dishonest in his attitude toward circum-

cision and keeping the law of Moses. Some of the Galatians had already submitted to circumcision and embraced with zealous endeavor the party of their new leaders, when Paul wrote this letter to them; and the rest were thrown into a state of agitation, confusion, and division.

In charging that Paul was not a true apostle (cf. 1 Cor. 9: 1; 2 Cor. 11; 13; 12: 12), the Judaizers no doubt pointed out that since he was not with Jesus during his earthly ministry, he could not therefore have received his commission directly from him, as did the twelve; and that as a result the gospel which Paul preached was, at best, only that which he had learned from the original apostles. But what these enemies did not know, or if they did they chose not to say anything about it, was that Jesus appeared directly to Paul and gave him his commission, just as truly as he did to the twelve. (Cf. Acts 26: 12-19; 1 Cor. 15: 8-10.) Paul therefore could tell the Galatians that the gospel which he preached was not learned from men, as had been the case with them; but that it came to him directly from the Lord. (Cf. 1 Cor. 11: 23ff; 15: 3.)

For ye have heard of my manner of life in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and made havoc of it: and I advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of mine own age among my countrymen, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. In saying these things, Paul was in effect telling the Galatians that they themselves could bear witness to the fact that he was telling the truth about his gospel. They knew of his past life, and if they would only stop and think, they would certainly know that his whole manner of life was completely unfitted for any such teaching as the twelve might have been able to give him. And furthermore, only a conversion under such unusual circumstances could account for such a radical change, as that which took place in Paul.

But when it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb, called me through his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles; straightway I conferred not with flesh and blood:

neither went I up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before me: but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned unto Damascus. The manner in which Paul refers to his conversion clearly implies that it was well known to the Galatians; and that, along with the circumstances surrounding it, was further proof that he had had no human instruction regarding the gospel which he preached. Instead of going to Jerusalem where the apostles were, he went into Arabia, and then returned to the place of his conversion.

Further Proof of His Apostolic Independence (Gal. 1: 18-24)

Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and tarried with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. This appears to be the same visit which is recorded in Acts 9: 26ff. In commenting on Paul's statement regarding the visit, The Expositor's Greek Testament says, "This narrative is so independent of the account given of Paul's first meeting with the twelve in Acts 9: 26-29, that some critics question the identity of the two visits. But it is clear that both passages alike refer to Paul's first return to Jerusalem, after a prolonged sojourn at Damascus; and the subtle harmony of the two narratives is as conspicuous as their independence in details. The history states the bare fact that Paul, finding his life in imminent danger from the Jews at Damascus, fled to Jerusalem; the epistle explains why he encountered so obvious a danger; the epistle states that he prolonged his stay to see Peter; the history explains that he was unable to gain access to the apostles for a time. The history records the principal events of the visit from the historical point of view, e.g., the apprehensions felt by the Christian body, the intervention of Barnabas, the attempts on Paul's life; the autobiography passes these by as foreign to its purpose, but is far richer in personal details, relating incidentally the date, the motive, and the duration of the visit, and particularising the brethren whom Paul saw on the occasion; whereas in Acts mention is merely made of the disciples generally."

Thus, Paul's purpose in verses 18, 19 was to show that he had had no previous association with the apostles; and that when he did see any of them, it was Peter only. James is mentioned as being an apostle, but he was not, of course, one of the twelve. The term "apostle" means one sent; and in that sense there were several such men, other than the twelve and Paul. (Cf. Acts 14: 14; 2 Cor. 8: 23, marginal note; cf. Heb. 3: 1.) James may have been called an apostle because of his great influence in the Jerusalem church. (Cf. Acts 15: 13ff; Gal. 2: 6ff, 11ff.)

Now touching the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. This was a kind of oath, or solemn affirmation, which was frequently with Paul. (Cf. Rom. 1: 9; 2 Cor. 1: 23; Phil. 1: 8; 1 Thess. 2:

5.) The solemnity of this appeal to God shows how much importance Paul attached to the independence of his ministry, as well as the persistency of the misrepresentations to which he had been subjected.

Then I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was still unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: but they only heard say, He that once persecuted us now preacheth the faith of which he once made havoc; and they glorified God in me.

Several years of Paul's life are here passed over in silence, since they were doubtless known to the Galatians, and were not important to his purpose here. His aim was to show that he had been away from Jerusalem and the other apostles, and his ministry therefore was independent of theirs.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What and where were the churches of Galatia?
What was his over-all purpose in writing this letter?
Why was such a letter necessary at that time?
What was the general plan and purpose of the Judaizers?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances did Paul write the words of this text?
What were some of the charges made against Paul by his enemies which indicated that he was trying to please men?
In what way did he answer these false charges?
What can you say of our responsibility in this connection?

Apostolic Address and Greeting

Why did Paul emphasize his apostleship in this address?
In what way did he show that he was a genuine apostle?
What "brethren" were probably with Paul at the time he wrote his letter to the Galatians?
In what way did Paul indicate his interest in and love for the Galatians?
What two great propositions did Paul weave into his address and greeting?
Why was this done?
In what way does the introduction of Galatians differ from all of the other epistles of Paul?

Paul Vindicates His Apostolic Authority

In what way had the Galatians been turned away from Paul?
Discuss the spirit of the false teachers.

Show how that same spirit is still manifested today.
Why will false teachers take advantage of the weak and unsuspecting brethren, instead of coming out into the open with their doctrine?
What is the only way to remedy this unholy practice?
Discuss the method by which human nature is supplanted by the divine nature.
What did Paul mean by telling the Galatian brethren that he was making something known to them?
Why was it necessary that he refresh the memory of the Galatian Christians?
How did the Judaizers probably go about trying to prove that Paul was not a genuine apostle?
How do we know that he was a true apostle?
Why did Paul call the Galatians' attention to his former manner of life?
Why did he call attention to his conversion and its surrounding circumstances?

Further Proof of His Apostolic Independence

What other record do we have of this same visit to Jerusalem?
Why mention the fact that he waited three years before going?
Why say that he saw only Cephas (Peter) and James?
What James was this?
In what probable sense was he an apostle?
What is the basic meaning of the term "apostle"?
In what way did Paul emphasize the fact that he was telling the truth?
Why did he make this solemn appeal to God?
Where did he go after leaving Jerusalem on this occasion?
What was the relation of the Judaeen churches to him?
What was his purpose in saying what he did about the churches of Judaea?

Lesson X—June 9, 1963

PAUL DEFENDS HIS LIBERTY IN CHRIST

Lesson Text

Gal. 2: 1-10, 19-21

1 Then after the space of fourteen years I went up again to Je-ru'-sa-lem with Bar'-na-bas, taking Ti'-tus also with me.

2 And I went up by revelation; and I laid before them the gospel which I preach among the Gen'-tiles but privately before them who were of repute, lest by any means I should be running, or had run, in vain.

3 But not even Ti'-tus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised:

4 And that because of the false brethren privily brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Je'-sus, that they might bring us into bondage:

5 To whom we gave place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

6 But from those who were reputed to be somewhat (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth not man's person)—they, I say, who were of repute imparted nothing to me:

7 But contrariwise, when they saw that I had been intrusted with the

gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter with the *gospel* of the circum-cision

8 (For he that wrought for Peter unto the apostleship of the circum-cision wrought for me also unto the Gen'-tiles);

9 And when they perceived the grace that was given unto me, James and Ce'-phas and John, they who were reputed to the pillars, gave to me and Bar'-na-bas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go unto the Gen'-tiles, and they unto the cir-cumcision;

10 Only *they would* that we should remember the poor; which very thing I was also zealous to do.

19 For I through the law died unto the law, that I might live unto God.

20 I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that *life* which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, *the faith* which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me.

21 I do not make void the grace of God: for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nought.

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gal. 2: 11-18.

Golden Text.—“By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal. 2: 16.)

Daily Bible Readings

- June 3. M.....Efforts of False Teachers (Acts 15: 1-5)
- June 4. T.....Galatian Churches Influenced (Gal. 2: 1-10)
- June 5. W.....Peter's Weakness (Gal. 2: 11-18)
- June 6. T.....Freedom through Christ (Gal. 5: 1-6)
- June 7. F.....Freedom No Excuse for Ungodly Living (Gal. 5: 13-15)
- June 8. S.....Deliverance from the Law (Gal. 3: 11-14)
- June 9. S.....Victory through Christ (Rom. 8: 12-17)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Galatians was written from Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Galatian churches.

Introduction

The term “liberty,” as used in this study, has reference to the freedom which we have in Christ, in contrast with the restraints of the law of Moses, which were looked upon as a kind of slavery. As Jesus was beginning his great Galilean ministry,

he came one day to the sabbath meeting in Nazareth, and at the appropriate time he stood up and read a selection from Isaiah which fore-told of his mission to the earth; and among other things is this statement: “He hath sent me to proclaim re-

lease to the captives." (See Luke 4: 14-19.) Captivity of any kind has always been a sad spectacle; but one of the most difficult from which release is possible is that of a religious character. Jesus came to set men free; and Paul proposed to see to it that those who have been set free are not again entangled in their former bondage. (Cf. John 8: 31, 32; Gal. 5: 1.)

Christianity, at the time of Paul's conversion, was limited almost entirely to the Jewish race; but when the time came for him to go and be with Jesus, it was a world-religion. There were others, of course, who carried the gospel to the Gentiles; but their work is almost lost sight of in the brighter glory of Paul's achievements. It was through his powerful leadership that the early Christian movement developed into an international brotherhood. Paul was a man of extraordinary vigor and originality, and his emancipation from the narrow limits of Judaism released his powers and gave them a world-wide scope. There were two major factors which contributed to the great success which attended his labors, namely, the universal message which he had to proclaim

(Mark 16: 15; Rom. 1: 16), and the breadth and strength of personality with which he interpreted that message.

The original conception of the Messiahship of Jesus was Jewish, but Paul interpreted and enlarged its significance. In the Greek language, and in the thought forms of that culture, he pictured Christ as the crucified revealer of God's love, risen to the right hand of God, sitting on his throne, acting as mediator between God and man, dwelling in his people through the Holy Spirit, and raising them with him into a divine life with the Father. This was the way of salvation for which men and women were looking, and through Paul's preaching all classes of people were able to lay hold upon Christ, to rise with him into newness of life, and to look eagerly for a full revelation of God in human affairs. That liberty is still the ideal for all people today, and it is the obligation of all Christian people to see to it that it is maintained. It is, of course, still possible for the narrow, sectarian views of professed Christians to hold people in the bondage of religious error and bigotry; and thoughtful people know that that is often done.

The Golden Text

"By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." The place which "works" have in the New Testament plan of salvation has long been a subject of discussion among religious people. However, if one will consider the unusual viewpoints which have characterized the discussion, he will soon see that one of the principal causes of disagreement on the subject is the failure to recognize the fact that the term "works" is used in two different senses by New Testament writers. It should be obvious to any thoughtful person that unity on any Bible question is never possible until and unless all the principal terms used by inspired writers on that subject are given the same place and meaning that they originally had. Bible terms still have exactly the same meaning which they had when they were first placed in the divine record; and all that we need to be concerned with now is the selection of English terms which convey the original meaning to us to-

day. When this is done with all the terms employed by inspired writers in setting forth the truth regarding any subject, unity on that subject will inevitably follow.

It is easy for the informed Christian to say that the "works" of the text now under consideration refer to the works of the law of Moses, for that is what Paul says; but the uninformed person who is in need of salvation does not grasp the idea so readily. If one will turn to Eph. 2: 8-10 he will find the term "works" used in that passage in two totally different senses: (1) in the sense of meritorious works, or works which, in and of themselves, procure the desired end; and (2) works of obedience. Any work which is commanded of God proceeds from him; and when it is obeyed the result is not meritorious work, but simple obedience. (Cf. John 6: 28, 29.) Faith includes all the works which God requires; and, as has been observed by Canon Westcott, "this sim-

pie formula contains the complete solution of the relation of faith and works."

The law of Moses would have resulted in salvation, if those who were under it could have kept all of its requirements (Lev. 18: 5; Gal. 3: 10-12); but since that was utterly impossible on the part of fallible humanity, the result was hopeless destruction or a new plan would have to be found. But since God is who he is, he could not be true to himself without making the salvation of

the race possible; hence the sacrifice of his Son and the way of faith introduced. This "new and living way" (Heb. 10: 20) indeed requires *works*, but they result from faith and make faith perfect (James 2: 22). The individual has faith in Christ, and that faith leads him to do exactly as Christ commands. There is nothing meritorious about works of this kind, but the one performing them simply recognizes Christ as the author of his salvation (Heb. 5: 8, 9) and seeks to obey him.

The Text Explained

An Account of Paul's Defence of His Gospel at the Jerusalem Conference

(Gal. 2: 1-5)

Then after the space of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus also with me. And I went up by revelation; and I laid before them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles but privately before them who were of repute, lest by any means I should be running, or had run, in vain.

Paul's purpose in this and the following section of our lesson for today was to continue the historical proof of his apostolic independence, which he began in the preceding chapter, and which we considered in the previous lesson. The visit to Jerusalem which he mentions here is the same as that referred to in Acts 15. Paul and Barnabas had returned to Antioch in Syria from their missionary journey, and had been with the church in Antioch for some time. (See Acts 14: 26-28) when "certain men came down from Judaea and taught the brethren, saying, Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved. And when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and questioning with them, the brethren appointed that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question." (Acts 15: 1, 2.)

Bible students are not agreed regarding the date from which the fourteen year period is reckoned, but taking all things into consideration, it is very probable that both the three years of Gal. 1: 18 and the fourteen years of this passage were

counted from the time of his conversion. No mention is made of the trip to Jerusalem which is referred to in Acts 11: 27-30, since it was during a period of persecution (see Acts 12) when he would have no access to the apostles; and inasmuch as his purpose was to show his independence of the other apostles, there would be no point in calling attention to that visit. Luke says that the brethren in Antioch appointed that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go to Jerusalem about the question of circumcising the Gentiles; while Paul says that he went up by revelation. It is, of course, altogether possible that the church made the appointment as a result of the revelation which had in some way been made to Paul.

It appears that the first thing that Paul did after reaching Jerusalem was to lay before the assembly the facts regarding his gospel, that is, the gospel which he had been preaching and which he was still preaching when he wrote Galatians (see "which I preach," present tense), but privately before the apostles, and probably other leading brethren. There was no doubt in Paul's mind regarding the truthfulness of the gospel which he was preaching, but it was a wise move on his part to see to it that there was no misunderstanding on the part of the others, and especially the leaders; for if there had been a rejection, or even a question, on their part regarding that which he was doing, his whole purpose in going to Jerusalem would have been defeated. This should be a lesson to all of us. Just a little effort on our part can often clear up a matter, and avoid that which could

grow into a major misunderstanding. When there is any question, try to clear the matter up before a public statement is made.

But not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: and that because of the false brethren privily brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: to whom we gave place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

It is a well known fact that Paul, as long as he could do so without violating any principle of truth and righteousness, tried to maintain a conciliatory attitude toward the Jews in his effort to win them to Christ. (Cf. Acts 16: 1-3; 1 Cor. 9: 19ff.) This may have been one of the reasons why he did not take Titus with him on his earlier missionary journey. The Jews would have resented a Gentile. But when it became necessary for Paul to take an aggressive stand against his Judaizing opponents, it appears that he took Titus with him to the Jerusalem conference by a carefully-designed stroke of policy. It is very likely that the Judaizing teachers had endeavored to make it appear that Paul's action in circumcising Timothy showed how he really felt about "Judaic-Christianity." But according to Paul, in the passage now before us, so far were the apostles and other leaders from seeking to set him right with reference to his work among the Gentiles, that they did not even demand that Titus, who himself was a Greek, be circumcised.

According to Vincent, The Expositor's Greek Testament, et al, there was no attempt made at the Jerusalem conference to have Titus circumcised. The controversy regarding him took place in Antioch, rather than at Jerusalem; and it was for that reason that Paul brought him to the conference with the apostles and others, where they hoped to have the question settled. His was the "test case," but the Jerusalem leaders did not insist on his being circumcised. It is true that there were some at the conference who thought it "needful to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses" (Acts 15: 5); but Luke says

that they "believed," which, of course, means that they accepted Christ, although they were mistaken regarding the Gentile converts. There is no evidence that they caused any trouble, but apparently joined the others in the final decision. (Acts 15: 22ff.) It is therefore altogether probable that they were not the "false brethren" of Gal. 2: 3 who had come in privily to spy out the liberty of Christians.

The term which Paul used to describe these false brethren is *pseudadelphos*, and it is found in only one other place in the New Testament—2 Cor. 11: 26. And he says concerning those now before us that they were *privily*, that is, "secretly brought in, smuggled in, sneaked in . . . of Judaizers who, as Paul felt, had come into Gentile Christian congregations in a dishonorable fashion, in order to spy on them, Gal. 2: 4" (Arndt and Gingrich; cf. Jude 4). The dignified term "believed" would hardly apply to such characters as Paul was talking about. There is a vast difference between a Christian who has a mistaken idea about some point of doctrine, and an outright hypocrite whose presence in the congregation was gained by deceit, and whose only purpose is to spy on faithful brethren. The former will listen to reason and will accept the truth when he learns it, while the latter is practically hopeless, at least until he repents and changes his basic attitude. Wise leaders in the congregations will recognize the difference between these two classes, and will deal with them accordingly.

The Recognition Which They
Received from James, Cephas,
and John
(Gal. 2: 6-10)

But from those who were reputed to be somewhat (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me; God accepteth not man's person)—they, I say, who were of repute imparted nothing to me: but contrariwise, when they saw that I had been intrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter with the gospel of the circumcision (for he that wrought for Peter unto the apostleship of the circumcision wrought for me also unto the Gentiles); and 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 the circumcision; only they would that we should remember the poor; which very thing I was also zealous to do.

This is an example of the long sentences which are often found in Paul's writing. After showing that he was successful in his struggle with the unprincipled Judaizers (who might very properly be called "no-what"), having received the endorsement of the entire personnel of the Jerusalem gathering (Acts 15: 22), Paul next turns to a consideration of his personal relationship with the apostles themselves—those who were regarded by others, rather than by themselves, as being pillars in the church. This figure evidently grew out of the habitual application to the church of figures of a temple with its supporting pillars. During the lifetime of Jesus here upon the earth, Peter and John were very close to him, being members of the so-called "inner circle;" while James was the Lord's brother (half-brother) in the flesh. Peter (Greek) is the same as Cephas, the Aramaic surname which Christ gave to Simon. (John 1: 42.)

Not only was Paul not reproved or corrected by the apostles at the Jerusalem conference; instead they commended his ministry among the Gentiles, because they plainly saw that the Holy Spirit himself both directed and endorsed it. The whole history of the conference shows that the men who spoke on the questions of the hour; for no uninspired man would dare use such language as they employed—"For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us." (Acts 15: 28f.) The apostles further recognized the fact that the Holy Spirit had fitted and directed both Peter and Paul into their respective fields of labors; and they did not hesitate to recognize those things. The only request which they made of Paul and Barnabas was that they should remember the poor, a thing which they were already zealously doing. (Cf. Acts 11: 27-30.) At the time Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians, he was engaged in the great collection for the poor saints of Jerusalem, and would be, within a few

months, taking it to that city in person. (Cf. Rom. 15: 25-28.)

The three apostles mentioned in the text now before us not only acknowledged the truth of Paul's divine mission to the Gentiles; they also gave an outward demonstration of their attitude toward him and Barnabas, namely, "the right hands of fellowship." These men had been on the defensive throughout the controversy which began in Antioch, and, left to themselves, it would have been easy for the Jerusalem apostles to admit that the visitors to their city were in the right, and let the matter drop there. But they, too, were men of principle, as well as inspired; and they were glad to put themselves on record as fully endorsing that which had been, up to the Jerusalem conference, a very unpopular position among many of the Jews. Most people think that Paul did right in seeking the endorsement of the leading apostles *privately* before arguing his position in public; but there are many who apparently fail to recognize that the ones who were consulted also had a responsibility in the matter—that of giving their *public* endorsement when they saw that the position was correct.

The Gospel Which Paul Preached Illustrated by His Own Experience
(Gal. 2: 19-21)

For I through the law died unto the law, that I might live unto God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me. I do not make void the grace of God: for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nought.

This section of our lesson is the climax of Paul's long and successful effort to sustain his apostolic independence and authority. After pointing out to the Galatian brethren that he and Barnabas were completely endorsed by the Jerusalem conference, and actually received the right hands of fellowship from the apostles who were regarded as pillars in the church, Paul next shows that his apostolic independence and authority were further recognized by his encounter with Peter at Antioch

(Gal. 2: 11-18); at which time he emphasized that all Jewish Christians, including Peter and the other apostles, had tacitly admitted that the law could not save men when they sought justification through Christ, and climaxed his argument with his own personal experience.

Verse 19, which Bengel calls "the sum and marrow of Christianity," sets forth Paul's reason for his statement in verse 18: "For if I build up again those things which I destroyed, I prove myself a transgressor." Bible students are not agreed as to the meaning of "law" in verse 19, due to the fact that there is no article before the term; but if the reference is to the law of Moses, which seems most probable, then Paul apparently is saying that as the law ended with Christ (Rom. 10: 4), so it led him to

Christ and accomplished its purpose in him (2 Tim. 3: 14, 15) and as a result he became dead to it (Rom. 7: 1-6). Verse 20 shows how his death to the law was accomplished, and what his new relationship is. (Rom. 6: 1-11.) His conclusion in verse 21 is that he does not propose to "declare invalid, nullify, [or] set aside" the grace of God by returning to the law for justification (Rom. 3: 21-31); for if that could be done, then there was no occasion for the death of Christ, and it was therefore wholly unnecessary and entirely without purpose. (Cf. Acts 4: 12.) This makes it easy to understand why Paul was "determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (See 1 Cor. 2: 1, 2.) And this is the way it should be with us.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today?
Repeat the golden text.
Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

In what sense did Paul use the term "liberty" in the lesson text for today?
What application does it have for people in this age of the world?
Discuss Paul's part in making Christianity an international religion.
Name some of the ways by which people are brought into bondage now.

The Golden Text

What is the place of "works" in the gospel plan of salvation?
Why has this subject been so greatly misunderstood?
What is the only way to correct this misunderstanding?
What is the difference between "meritorious works" and "works of obedience"?
Why can't people be justified by the works of the law?

An Account of Paul's Defense of His Gospel at the Jerusalem Conference

What was Paul's purpose in writing that which we know as Gal. 2: 1-10?
What is the relation of this passage to the fifteenth chapter of Acts?
Under what circumstances was the Jerusalem conference held?
At what period in the life of Paul did it take place and why did he mention the date?
Show clearly how Paul came to attend the meeting?
Why would Paul, an inspired apostle himself, lay his case before the other apostles in private before discussing it publicly?
What lesson is there in this example for us?
What had always been Paul's attitude in his preaching toward the Jews?

What distinction did he make between Timothy and Titus with reference to circumcision and why?

Why did Paul take Titus with him to the Jerusalem conference?
Who were the "false brethren" of Gal. 2: 4?

What is the difference between brethren with erroneous ideas of doctrine and outright hypocrites in the church?
What lesson is there in this for Christians today, and especially church leaders?

The Recognition Which They Received from James, Cephas, and John

Discuss the progress which Paul was making in his efforts to gain recognition of the independence of his apostolic authority.

Why were the three apostles named here considered pillars in the church?
What was their attitude toward Paul's claim?
How did they know that Paul was right?
What sole request did they make of him and Barnabas?
What is indicated in extending to them the right hands of fellowship?
What lesson should we learn from this incident?

The Gospel Which Paul Preached Illustrated by His Own Experience

What is the relation of this section of the lesson to that which goes before in the Galatian letter?
What was the occasion for Paul's saying what he did in verses 19-21?
How did he through the law die unto the law?
How was that death accomplished and what was his new relationship?
What conclusion did he draw in verse 21?
What effect did that attitude have on Paul's preaching?
What lesson is there in this for us?

Lesson XI—June 16, 1963

PURPOSE OF THE LAW OF MOSES

Lesson Text

Gal. 3: 1-3, 19-29

1 O foolish Ga-la'-tians, who did bewitch you, before whose eyes Je'-sus Christ was openly set forth crucified?

2 This only would I learn from you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh?

19 What then is the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise hath been made; and it was ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator.

20 Now a mediator is not a mediator of one; but God is one.

21 Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have been of the law.

22 But the scripture shut up all things under sin, that the promise by faith in Je'-sus Christ might be given to them that believe.

23 But before faith came, we were kept in ward under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

24 So that the law is become our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

25 But now that faith is come, we are no longer under a tutor.

26 For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Je'-sus.

27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ.

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

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

Devotional Reading.—Gal. 3: 4-18.

Golden Text.—"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law." (Gal. 3: 13.)

Daily Bible Readings

June 10. M.....	.....Law Given to Israelites (Deut. 5: 1, 2)
June 11. T.....	.....Law Given Because of Transgressions (Gal. 3: 16-19)
June 12. W.....	.....Law to Last Till Christ Came (Matt. 5: 16-20)
June 13. T.....	.....Law Could not Justify (Gal. 2: 11-21)
June 14. F.....	....."Fallen Away from Grace" (Gal. 5: 1-6)
June 15. S.....	.....Christ Redeemed us from Curse of the Law (Gal. 3: 10-14)
June 16. S.....	.....Law Nailed to the Cross (Col. 2: 14-17)

Time.—A.D. 57.

Place.—Galatians was written from Corinth.

Persons.—Paul and the Galatian churches.

Introduction

One of the great hindrances to an understanding of the simple gospel of Christ is a lack of understanding regarding the purpose of the law of Moses. There are thousands of religious teachers today, among whom are numbered some of the outstanding preachers of the denominational world, who proceed on the assumption that the Lord's people today are indiscriminately under Moses, the

prophets, and the Lord Jesus Christ. This unfortunate situation is everywhere apparent, not because there is no teaching in the New Testament regarding the question, but because such men have not made the effort to handle aright the word of truth. (2 Tim. 2: 15.) This is one of the most important subjects which can engage our attention; for if people are led to see the proper divisions of

the word of God (cf. Heb. 1: 1, 2), it will be relatively easy for them to see what the Lord's will is for them.

After the history of the church had passed through the dark ages, during which time religious error held all but complete sway over the minds of men, the great Reformation burst forth upon the horizon; and it was from that mighty movement that that which is today known as Protestant denominationalism had its origin. The men who were identified with the Reformation in its early stages had as their aim the reforming of the Roman Catholic Church, rather than the restoring of the New Testament church. But failing in their efforts to reform the existing conditions, their followers organized new denominations which featured the ideas of the reformers. It was during the closing part of the eighteenth century that efforts began to be made to *restore* the ancient order of things, and during the early years of the nineteenth century the Restoration Movement got under way in earnest.

It was the aim of the men who were responsible for the Restoration Movement to complete the work of the Protestant Reformation by restoring the New Testament church and the practice of apostolic Christianity. They had no intention of founding a new church, and neither did they found one. The restoration was not a haphazard effort, but was conceived and conducted on the basis

of certain well-defined and fundamental principles, among which was a proper distinction between the Old and New Testaments. In furtherance of this idea, Alexander Campbell, one of the early advocates of a return to the ancient order of things, preached a sermon on the purpose of the law which was nothing short of revolutionary in its effect upon the religious thinking of that day; and its influence is still felt today. In speaking of the effect of that address, M. M. Davis says:

"No single sermon ever delivered by this mighty preacher had the effect of this one. It was epoch-making. Here, for the first time, he drew clearly the difference between the law and the gospel, which proved in after years an impregnable bulwark in his conflicts with religious error. The law was temporary and local, but the gospel was for all time and universal. The antitype had given way to the type, and the shadow to the substance. As a system the law had waxed old and passed away. Only the ethical, which was necessarily immortal, remained. The patriarchal dispensation was the starlight; the Jewish dispensation was the moonlight; that of John the Baptist was the twilight; and the Christian dispensation, beginning with the coronation of the Christ and the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost, was the full sunlight. The patriarchs had the bud; the Jews had the blossom; the Christian had the matured fruit of divine grace."

The Golden Text

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law." The law of Moses pronounced both a blessing and a curse, but since it made no allowance for human weakness, the blessing was never fully realized by any human being. The curse, on the other hand, was the lot of every responsible being; for "there is not a righteous man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." (Eccl. 7: 20.) "There is none righteous, no, not one; . . . for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3: 10, 23). This was the terrible state of the world when Christ came into it; and it was from this hopeless state of just condemnation that he redeemed us, thereby revealing the infinite mercy of an Almighty Father, as The Ex-

positor's Greek Testament points out, and so reviving hope and thankful love in the heart of the condemned sinner by faith in his love.

The word "redeemed" in the passage now before us literally means to buy back, deliver, or ransom someone who was in bondage to another. Or, to change the wording somewhat, it has reference to the releasing of one which was done by the payment of a ransom. As used by Paul and other New Testament writers, the term refers to the deliverance from the wrath of God and the merited punishment of sin through the sacrificial death of Christ. (Cf. Eph. 1: 7; 1 Pet. 1: 18, 19.) According to the figure now before us, man was a condemned prisoner of the law, under

sentence of death, and had to have a ransom if he was to live. "But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." (Gal. 4: 4, 5.)

The entire verse from which the golden text is taken, reads as follows: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Verse 10 tells how people came under the curse of the law: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the

book of the law, to do them." The only way that man could be redeemed from this curse was for some one to pay the price which was demanded for his release; and since that could be done only by fulfilling the requirements of the law, Christ lived and died under the law, thereby satisfying it to the full; and so made it possible for all men to live as his people. The original passage from which the quotation in verse 13 was made referred to the speedy burial of any criminal who was executed by hanging him on a tree, because of the curse of God; and since Jesus was crucified on a cross (tree, cf. 1 Pet. 2: 24; Acts 13: 29), the Old Testament passage (Deut. 21: 22, 23) was made to apply to him.

The Text Explained

An Appeal to the Experience of the Galatians

(Gal. 3: 1-3)

O foolish Galatians, who did bewitch you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly set forth crucified? This only would I learn from you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh?

After having fully established the independence of his apostleship and authority, Paul next turns to a discussion of the intrinsic truth of the gospel which he preached. His first effort is to show that salvation is by faith, that is, by the gospel, rather than through the law of Moses. It is thought by many Bible students that the Galatians were intellectually capable of learning, and possessed acuteness of understanding; and being conscious of that capacity, the reproach which Paul administered to them in this place would be the more keenly felt. (Cf. Paul's rebuke of Peter in the preceding chapter, verse 11ff.) Their conduct was so inexplicable as to cause Paul to ask them if someone had cast an evil spell upon them.

The reason why it was difficult to understand the conduct of the Galatians was due to the fact that they had been so well indoctrinated in the truth by the apostle Paul himself. The original word for "was openly set forth" (*prographō*) is

found, in addition to the passage now before us, in Rom. 15: 4; Eph. 3: 3; Jude 4; where the reference is obviously to something which was previously written, or written beforehand. In commenting on the use of the term in Gal. 3: 1, Thayer says, "Since the simple *graphein* [to write] is often used of painters, and *prographein* [to write beforehand] certainly signifies also to *write before the eyes of all* who can read, I see no reason why *prographein* may not mean to *depict (paint portray) before the eyes?* that is, "openly set forth." Vincent says that the term now under consideration is the usual word to describe public notices or proclamations, that is, that which was posted up or placarded; and Arndt-Gingrich render it to show forth or portray publicly, proclaim or placard in public, hence, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was portrayed on the cross, that is, set forth in a public proclamation. (Cf. 1 Cor. 2: 1, 2.) And so, as Vincent renders the passage, "Who could have succeeded in bringing you under the spell of an evil eye, when directly before your own eyes stood revealed the crucified Christ?"

This was not the first time that Paul endeavored to learn the true facts of a situation by asking the people involved a simple question. (See Acts 19: 1-3.) When a person is permitted to answer a few simple questions himself regarding some basic issues concerning his own case, it usually will not take him long to

see the truth regarding them. And so Paul asked the Galatians, "This only would I learn from you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" This was an appeal to their own experience, and as Luther notes, "See how effectually he treats the topic from experience." The implication of Paul's question was too obvious to require an answer by the Galatians; for their own experience at the time of their conversion was the only reply which was needed.

Inasmuch as Paul's question was addressed to the whole membership of the Galatian churches, it is hardly reasonable to suppose that he was speaking solely of miraculous manifestations of the Spirit; for there is no record of such power being given to all the members of a congregation. Verse 5 makes it plain that there were miracles worked among the Galatians, but it does not say by whom; but in view of the practice during the days of miracles, it is reasonable to assume that some of those brethren received such power. (Cf. 1 Cor. 12: 4-11.) But even at that, the Holy Spirit was given to all of those who obeyed the gospel, before they received power to work miracles; for God gives the Spirit to all who obey him. (See Acts 5: 32; John 7: 37-39; Acts 2: 38, 39; 2 Cor. 5: 17; Tit. 3: 5, 6; Gal. 3: 14.) Since all of these blessings had come to the Galatians as a result of their spiritual change, it would be nothing short of folly for them to think that they could be perfected by turning to mere fleshly ordinances, including circumcision. Paul will have more to say about this in chapter 5.

The Reason for Giving: the Law (Gal. 3: 19-22)

What then is the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise hath been made; and it was ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one; but God is one.

Paul's question regarding the purpose of the law must be understood in the light of the remarks he just made with reference to the law and the covenant which God made with Abraham. "Now this I say: A cov-

enant confirmed beforehand by God, the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after, doth not disannul, so as to make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no more of promise: but God hath granted it to Abraham by promise." (Gal. 3: 17, 18.) Since the promise to Abraham was fulfilled in Christ (Gal. 3: 8, 16), and since the law came in between the promise and its fulfillment, it follows therefore that the law was both temporary and inferior to the gospel; and that is further confirmed by the manner in which the law was given. In the case of the law both angels (intermediaries, Acts 7: 53; Heb. 2: 2) and a mediator (Moses, Ex. 20: 19; Deut. 5: 5) were employed; but in the case of the promise made to Abraham regarding Christ, God spoke to that patriarch without any such agencies, thereby further showing that the law was inferior to the gospel which was the fulfillment of the promise made to the father of the faithful.

The general purpose of the law of Moses may be stated as follows: (1) Since the Jewish nation was being formed into a theocracy at the time the law was given, it may well be said that it was given to the Israelites for all the purposes of a civil government. (2) It was added to convince and convict men of sin—to give knowledge of sin. This was done by giving the people a perfect standard to govern their conduct; and when they failed to keep it, the result would be a knowledge of sin. (See Rom. 5: 13, 20; 7: 7-13.) But Paul makes it plain that the law was only a temporary arrangement, and was intended to last only until Christ, the promised seed, should come. (3) It served as a wall of partition between the Jews and the Gentiles until Christ came, as may be seen by reading Eph. 2: 14-18. (4) It appears that the law was designed to prevent the universal spread of idolatry until Christ should come. This was done by preserving among men the knowledge of God and the practice of true religion. (Ex. 20: 1-6; Milligan, *The Scheme of Redemption*, p. 83ff.)

Milligan and Alexander Campbell (*The Christian System*, p. 150ff) point out that the law of Moses also served as a kind of pictorial outline

of the redemption which was to be wrought through Christ. This was done by means of certain types, symbols, rites, and ceremonies. (Cf. Heb. 10: 1; Col. 2: 16, 17.) According to Campbell, "So full of the doctrine of the New institution was the Old, that we find all the apostles and Christian writers unceremoniously applying everything they quote from the law, the prophets, and the psalms to the Messiah, his kingdom, and the fortunes of his people, as if the Jewish writings had no other object than to unfold the kingdom of heaven." This, of course, makes it necessary for those who would understand the New Testament to have a working knowledge of the Old, including the meaning of the principal words and phrases which are found therein; for as Campbell continues, "All the leading words and phrases of the New Testament are to be explained and understood by the history of the Jewish nation and God's government of them." (Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 15-17.)

Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have been of the law. But the scripture shut up all things under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

Paul's second question in this section of our lesson was intended to complete his argument regarding the relationship of the law and the gospel which grew out of God's promise to Abraham. The law, he says, is not against the promise, for the simple reason that the law could not do that which the gospel in designed to do, namely, make alive. (Cf. Rom. 1: 16; 6: 3, 4; Eph. 2: 1ff; Gal. 2: 21.) The "scripture" is here personified, and is represented as a "jailor" who "shut up" all responsible people, both Jews and Gentiles, under sin, that is, caused them to be regarded as sinners. (See Rom. 11: 32; cf. Luke 5: 6, where the same original word (inclosed) is used.) This was done so that all would be subjects of the gospel, without respect of persons. (Cf. Acts 10: 34, 35.)

The Law Was Intended to Bring Its
Subjects to Christ
(Gal. 3: 23-29)

But before faith came, we were

kept in ward under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. So that the law is become our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith is come, we are no longer under a tutor.

The term "tutor," according to Arndt-Gingrich, was a slave or custodian, literally, a "boy-leader," whose duty it was to conduct the boy or youth to and from school, and to superintend his conduct generally; he was not a "teacher," despite the present meaning of the derivative *pedagogue*. In speaking of this, Thayer says, "Among the Greeks and Romans the name was applied to trustworthy slaves who were charged with the duty of supervising the life and morals of boys belonging to the better class. The boys were not allowed so much as to step out of the house without them before arriving at the age of manhood; . . . the Mosaic law is likened to a tutor because it arouses the consciousness of sin, and is called *paidagogos eis Christon* [tutor to Christ], i.e. preparing the soul for Christ, because those who have learned by experience with the law that they are not and cannot be commended to God by their works, welcome the more eagerly the hope of salvation offered them through the death and resurrection of Christ, the Son of God." The "tutorship" of the law continued until God, in his own wisdom, decided that the time had arrived for him to send his Son to redeem them. (Cf. Gal. 4: 1-5.) The "faith" which came is *the* faith (in the original), that is, the gospel.

For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. The prepositional phrase, "through faith," through the faith in the original, is explanatory. Christians are sons of God in Christ, and they became so through the gospel, that is, by obeying the gospel. To be in Christ is to be in the church, which is his body (Eph. 1: 22, 23); and that is the sphere where the Christian life is lived. It is possible that the figure of "putting on Christ" was borrowed from the custom of the Greeks and Romans in changing from the toga (the loose outer garment) of the boy to that of the older or more matured person; and so when a per-

son is baptized into Christ, in keeping with that figure, he is invested with the robe of spiritual manhood. The practical meaning, however, is that he becomes like Christ.

There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus. And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise. After having showed the temporary and subordinate function of the law of Moses, and the manner in which people are brought into Christ where salvation is to be found (cf. Acts 4: 12), Paul

next points out that regardless of the distinctions which were made in previous life, all are saved on exactly the same basis, insofar as their relationship to Christ is concerned. The gospel is for all on equal terms; and all who are in Christ are heirs of the promise which God made to Abraham. Verse 29 is paraphrased by Macknight in these words: "And if ye be Christ's brethren by possessing his temper of mind, certainly ye are Abraham's seed, more really than those Jews who are related to him by natural descent, and heirs of the heavenly country, according to God's promise to Abraham."

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?
Repeat the golden text.
Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What is one of the great hindrances to a proper understanding of the gospel of Christ?
Why is this true?
Show why it is so necessary for one to divide the word properly.
Give a broad outline of the way in which men of modern times came to recognize this necessity.
In what way did Alexander Campbell emphasize this need?
Discuss the effect which his sermon had on his contemporaries.

The Golden Text

What was the curse of the law from which Christ redeemed the people?
What is the meaning and significance of the term "redeem"?
How did Christ perfect the redemption from the curse of the law?

An Appeal to the Experience of the Galatians

Under what circumstances did Paul address the Galatians as foolish?
Why was it difficult for Paul to understand their turning away from Christ?
In what way was Christ openly set forth before their eyes?
How did Paul seek to get at the truth regarding them?
Why is it so important to ask some simple questions regarding one's status?
In what way had they received the Spirit?
How do people today receive the Spirit?

How do we know that people today cannot work miracles?

The Reason for Giving the Law

Under what setting did Paul ask his question regarding the law?
Why was it "added" and to what was it added?
In what way did Paul show that the law is inferior to the gospel?
In speaking of the mediator, What did Paul mean by saying that God is one?
What was the general purpose of the law of Moses?
In what way did it picture the redemption in Christ?
Why is it essential to understand the Old Testament in order to grasp the meaning of the New?
How did Paul go about showing that the law was not against the promise to Abraham?
In what way did the "scripture" shut up all things under sin?
Why was this done?

The Law Was Intended to Bring Its Subjects to Christ

What was the status of the people under the law before the coming of Christ?
In what sense was the law their "tutor"?
What was the difference between a "schoolmaster" and a "tutor," as Paul used the term?
Where is sonship now to be had?
How is this accomplished?
What does it mean for one to put on Christ?
What happens to all previous distinctions between those who are brought into Christ?
What conclusion did Paul draw in verse 29?



The richest pearl in the Christian's crown of graces is humility. — Good.

It is better to wear out than to rust out. — Cumberland.

Lesson XII—June 23, 1963

FREEDOM THROUGH CHRIST

Lesson Text

Gal. 5: 1-6, 16-24

1 For freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage.

2 Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing.

3 Yea, I testify again to every man that receiveth circumcision, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.

4 Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace.

5 For we through the Spirit by faith wait for the hope of righteousness.

6 For in Christ Je'-sus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love.

16 But I say, Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

17 For the flesh lusteth against the

Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would.

18 But if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

20 Idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties,

21 Envyings, drunkenness, revelings, and such like; of which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they who practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

23 Meekness, self-control; against such there is no law.

24 And they that are of Christ Je'-sus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof.

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gal. 5: 7-15.

Golden Text.—"Use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh" (Gal. 5: 13.)

Daily Bible Readings

June 17 M.....	Christ Makes Us Free (John 8: 31-36)
June 18. T.....	Freedom Not License to Sin (1 Pet. 2: 1-16)
June 19. W.....	Be Not Servants of Sin (Rom. 6: 18-22)
June 20. T.....	Christians Are Dead to Sin (Rom. 6: 1-16)
June 21. F.....	Christ Delivers from Sin and Death (Rom. 5: 15-18)
June 22. S.....	Crucified with Christ (Gal. 2: 20, 21)
June 23. S.....	Risen with Christ (Col. 3: 1-4)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Galatians was written from Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Galatian churches.

Introduction

The Epistle to the Galatians has been called the charter of religious freedom. Its noble ideal of the life in Christ, so far from being outgrown, still beckons us onward, as it did those obscure townspeople of the Galatian highlands in the long ago. Its principal purpose was to show the doctrine of the Judaizers did, in fact, destroy the very essence of Christianity, and reduced it to an outward and ceremonial system. This

letter therefore was a supreme effort to emancipate the gospel from the shackles of Jewish legalism. And while there are few people in the church today who are trying to lead people back to the old covenant under which the Jews lived before the coming of Christ; there are some who would practically destroy our Christian freedom, if they could have their way.

Any one who is acquainted with

the New Testament is aware of the fact that the teaching of Christ involves a moral, as well as a legal, emancipation, which has to do with the incalculable difference that lies between a life which is directed by rules and regulations as such, and one which is governed by principles rather than merely by rules. This implies that all the issues and relationships of the life of a Christian must be dealt with according to the spirit of Christ, as revealed in the New Testament; and not merely according to a religious statute-book or an ecclesiastical tribunal. Love must be the guiding principle in all things; and when that is the order of the day, there will be little doubt about the outcome. (Cf. John 14: 15; 1 John 5: 3.) People who live on that kind of plane, and are governed by that kind of principle, are primarily concerned with pleasing the Lord, rather than with having their own way. Their question is not, Is it all right for me to do this or that? but rather, What will please the Lord?

The aim of Christ is to make all men free; and the quicker we realize our need for freedom, the better it will be for us. We must face the

fact that we are in bondage of one kind or another, as long as we are in the flesh; and that genuine freedom can come to us only as we are willing to receive it from Christ. And too, we must learn what essential bondage is before we are prepared to seek for and enjoy true freedom; and this we may learn by considering the following: (1) *The bondage of the mind.* Unbelief in the spiritual leaves us slaves to the senses. The carnal-minded may fancy themselves possessed of large liberty, but earth and time at their best are indeed poor when compared with the Spirit. To be governed from below is essential bondage; and is worse than being bound hand and foot. (2) *The bondage of the will.* The awful tyranny of sin is evident when once it becomes the habit of life, and those who are so bound find themselves unable to shake off its shackles. (3) *The bondage of the conscience.* When once the conscience has become defiled by wrongdoing, man no longer considers that he is a sinner. (Cf. John 8: 34.) Such is the terrible bondage from which Christ wants to set us free.

The Golden Text

"Use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh" These words are taken from a short paragraph which reads as follows: "For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." Thus it is seen that freedom which comes to us from God is open to abuse by carnal-minded men. "Use," as may be seen by the italics, is not in the original, but was supplied by the translators. The term, however, appears necessary to the sense of the expression, and it is employed in the sense of hold, make, or turn. Thus, do not hold, make, or turn freedom improperly; or, as someone has paraphrased the statement, "Only do not treat it as an opening for carnal self-indulgence, but for loving service to each other."

The original word for "occasion" is sometimes used in a military sense as a base or starting-point for operation; and generally to any starting-point for action. It is used of sin in Rom. 7: 8, 11; 2 Cor. 11: 12; and in the text now before us. It is as if Paul says, "Christians are free from the shackles of outward law, but they are not at liberty to please themselves; instead, in thus being made free, they are at the same time brought under obligation of mutual love." This is one of the paradoxes of Christianity. The true ideal of the Christian is not freedom from responsibility, but unfettered service to the love of God and man, which pushes self into the background (cf. Matt. 16: 24), and subordinates all selfish desires to perfect love. (Cf. 1 Cor. 7: 22, 23.)

Peter sets forth substantially the same idea when he says, "As free, and not using your freedom for a cloak of wickedness, but as bond-servants of God." (1 Pet. 2: 16.) True freedom never grants the Christian the liberty to act contrary to God's

will; instead, it consists in the power to act without hindrance according to the highest law of our being. One never asserts his freedom when he does wrong. Such action, on the contrary, degrades him, enslaves him, and alienates him from God. The claim that the rules and laws of the Christian life are an infringement

upon Christian liberty is only a way of making such freedom a cloke of wickedness. Regular habits in the kingdom of Christ, the manifestation of brotherly love, and the keeping of a clear conscience toward God and man, are always in keeping with the New Testament idea of Christian freedom.

The Text Explained

Legalism Leaves No Room for Christ

(Gal. 5: 1-6)

For freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and he not entangled again in a yoke of bondage. The text of our lesson for today begins with the third division of Paul's letter to the Galatians, in which he exhorts the brethren to abide by the moral consequences which logically and legitimately result from the gospel which he preached to them. The apostle, in the preceding allegory, had sought to show his erring brethren the difference between the bondage of the law and the freedom in Christ; and since they had been set free from all previous bondage in order that they might enjoy freedom, he exhorts them not to become entangled again in their former bondage.

While none of us today is likely to become entangled in the bondage to the law of Moses, there is a far worse danger concerning which we should take heed. We have all been saved from sin, if indeed we are the Lord's people; and that is the worst taskmaster of all. And, too, there are false teachers now, just as there were in the days of Paul; and they are forever trying to entice Christians into error and sin. Peter warns of such people in these words: "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; 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. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the last state is become worse with them than the first. 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. 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." (2 Pet. 2: 18-22.)

Any person who seeks to lead any one away from the plain teaching of the Bible is a false teacher; for Jesus has made it plain that he will not recognize any one in the judgment who acts in an unauthorized manner. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will

I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. 7: 21-23.) There is no evidence that the people about whom Jesus spoke thought that they were not pleasing him; but they were not. They were guilty of iniquity which means that they had acted in an unauthorized manner. (See Thayer, *in loco*; cf. Rom. 10: 1-3.) This is enough to show that both the teacher and the taught have a responsibility with reference to God's will. (Cf. Matt. 15: 13, 14; 1 Cor. 4: 6; 2 John 9; John 7: 17; Matt. 13: 12.) It is easy for one to be brought into bondage to error, unless he is willing to exercise diligence. (Cf. Acts 17: 11, 12.)

Behold, I Paul say unto you, that, if ye receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing. Yea, I testify again to every man that receiveth circumcision, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace. For we through the

Spirit by faith wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love.

The interjection "behold" (imperative singular) is intended to draw attention to the strong statement which follows; while the expression "I Paul" is meant to add emphasis. Alford quotes Calvin as saying that "this way of speaking has great emphasis: he puts himself plainly in opposition, and gives his name, that the matter may admit of no doubt. And although his authority had been disparaged among the Galatians, yet he again asserts it as sufficient to refute all his adversaries." It is always possible, of course, for people to call in question that which the divine record says regarding any point of teaching, but that will make no difference with reference to the truth, either now or in the last day. "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life eternal; the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto me, so I speak." (John 12: 48-50.) Faithful teachers of God's word today may be disparaged, as Paul was by the Judaizers who led the Galatians into error; but that will not detract from the truth one iota, nor lessen in the least the responsibility of the one who receives the false teaching. (Cf. Luke 10: 16.)

The use of the present subjunctive passive ("if ye receive circumcision") implies that what Paul is condemning is not simply isolated acts of circumcision, but the introduction of a general practice which involved the transfer of allegiance from Christ to the law of Moses. The apostle, by this grammatical construction, does not charge that they had already been circumcised: he simply states the case as supposable, implying that they were in danger of doing so. And he warns them that if they do submit to circumcision, Christ will profit them nothing. This implies a choice between salvation by the law and salvation by Christ, with the re-

sult that the choice of the law necessarily meant that Christ would be rejected. Commentators frequently quote Chrysostom as saying, "He that allowed himself to be circumcised [for justification] did it as fearing the law; and he that thus feared, distrusted the power of grace; and he that distrusts gains nothing from that which he distrusts." The principle which Paul set forth here is an exact parallel of that which he introduced in Rom. 10: 1-3. No one can please the Lord who substitutes his own will for that of the scripture, regardless of how sincere he may be (Cf. Acts 23: 1; 24: 16.)

The Judaizers taught that Christianity was joined to and was an extension of Judaism, but Paul declares that the two are mutually exclusive. Thus, any one who seeks to be justified by the law falls away from grace, that is, he rejects and thereby falls away from salvation by grace. (Eph. 2: 8-10.) In the words of Robertson, 'Ye left the sphere of grace in Christ and took your stand in the sphere of law' as your hope of salvation. Paul does not mince words and carries the logic to the end of the course. He is not, of course, speaking of occasional sins, but he has in mind a far more serious matter, that of substituting law for Christ as the agent in salvation." This is enough to show that it is possible for a person to reject God's plan and fall away from his favor. (Cf. 2 Pet. 3: 17.) With Paul the Spirit inspires the faith (Rom. 10: 17) by which Christians wait for the hope of righteousness; and their sphere of activity is always in Christ, where they are ever motivated by faith working through love.

The Spirit and Man's Fleshly Nature

(Gal. 5: 16-18)

But I say, Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would. But if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

That which Paul is saying here is his way of showing how to avoid the sinful practices mentioned in verses 13-15. One walks by the Spirit when

he follows the direction of the Spirit, as set forth in his revealed word. (Cf. Rom. 8: 12-17.) The lust of the flesh means the desire or craving of the flesh, and the practical application is to the life lived apart from the influence of the Spirit. The Expositor's Greek Testament makes this comment on the fleshly and spiritual natures of man: "All the various motives which operate on the mind and will to prompt intention and action are comprehended under one of the two categories, spirit and flesh. The line of division between them corresponds to that drawn in 1 Cor. 2: 14 between the natural man (*psuchikos*) and the spiritual. The spirit of man owes its original existence to the quickening inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and depends for its continued life on the constant supply of his life-giving power: its impulses are therefore purely spiritual. In the term flesh are included all other desires of the natural man, not only the appetites and passions which he inherits in common with the animal creation, but all the desires that he conceives for the satisfaction of heart and mind."

When a person is redeemed from sin, he is made a new creature in Christ (2 Cor. 5: 17; Tit. 3: 5), and is strengthened with power through the Spirit in the inward man (Eph. 3: 16), as he endeavors to live for the Lord; but as long as he is in the world and is subject to temptation, there will be a conflict between the two opposing forces (cf. Rom. 7: 15-8: 11). But if one is willing to follow the leading of the Spirit, he is assured of help from the Lord in this great struggle. (Cf. 1 Cor. 10: 13; James 1: 2-8.) The entire eighth chapter of Romans is devoted to the privileges and blessings of sonship in Christ which are open to the believer. (Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17; 2 Pet. 1: 3.)

In the expression, "But if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law," one might expect to find the word "flesh" instead of law; but when we consider that which Paul says about the two, it is easy to see that they both belong to the same category. Circumcision was both a requirement of the law and a work of the flesh. The ordinances of the law are also called ordinances of the flesh (Heb. 9: 10, 13); the law was a

weak through the flesh (Rom. 8: 3); in Phil. 3: 3-6 Paul explains his grounds for confidence in the flesh as his righteousness according to the law. (Cf. Gal. 3: 2-6.) The whole legal economy, in fact, was one of the flesh, as distinguished from the Spirit. These two systems were opposed to each other, and Paul was telling the Galatians that if they were living according to the Spirit, they could not possibly be under the law.

The Works of the Flesh versus the Fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5: 19-24)

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, envyings, drunkenness, revellings and such like; of which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

In verse 18, Paul set forth the two possible ways one must travel, and in this section he sets forth a clearly defined standard, so that he may know whether he is being led by the Spirit, or is living according to the flesh. It should be observed that the "works" of the flesh are mentioned in the plural because they are distinct from, and are often inconsistent with, each other; while the "fruit" of the Spirit is in the singular, as being both consistent and joined together. It is well to note that "factions, divisions, parties" are listed along with some of the blackest sins of which people are guilty; and this should cause those who are responsible for them to stop and consider their ways. (Cf. Rev. 21: 8, where the *fearful* and *unbelieving* are in similar company.) Paul's warning regarding these sins is a fearful statement.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control; against such there is no law. If one will look at this list carefully, he will see that it may very properly be divided into three groups of three each: (1) love, joy, peace—our relation toward God; (2) long-suffering, kindness, goodness—our re-

lation toward our fellow men; (3) faithfulness, meekness, self-control—with reference to ourselves. (Cf. Tit. 2: 11, 12.) Neither God nor man will condemn a life lived after this fashion. God will not condemn it; for these things are the fruit of his own Spirit working within the soul of his redeemed creature. Man will not condemn this kind of life; for "who is he that will harm you, if ye be

zealous of that which is good?" (See 1 Pet. 3: 13.) Only those who have the fruit of the Spirit in their lives really understand the deep things of God. Paul frequently claims for the spiritual man superior discernments, and joys which are unknown to others; but this power is not of the intellect: it is a perception of the heart. (Cf. Matt. 5: 8; 1 Cor. 2: 11-16.)

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of our lesson for today?
Repeat the golden text.
Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What was Paul's prime purpose in writing his letter to the Galatians?
What need is there today for a message of emancipation?
What is the essential difference between being regulated by "rules" and by "principles"?
What is the aim of Christ regarding mankind?
How may we learn what essential bondage is?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstance did Paul write the words which serve as our golden text for today?
How may one use his freedom as an occasion to the flesh?
Discuss the meaning of the term "occasion."
How does true freedom operate in the lives of people?

Legalism Leaves No Room for Christ

Discuss the setting of this section of the lesson text.
Why did Paul give the exhortation of verse 1?
What application does it have for us?
What is our greatest danger, so far as bondage is concerned?
What great responsibility rests upon teachers and hearers alike?
What is the only sure way to keep out of erroneous bondage?
How did Paul go about emphasizing his warning to the Galatians?
What lesson should we learn from this regarding our attitude toward gospel teaching?

Why would the reception of circumcision make Christ of no profit to them?
What was the Judaizers' attitude toward the gospel?
Why couldn't people be under both Christ and the law at the same time?
What does Paul mean by falling from grace?
What is the position of the true Christian with reference to the hope of righteousness?
What is the motive for all acceptable activity?

The Spirit and Man's Fleshly Nature

Why did Paul tell the Galatians to walk by the Spirit?
How can one do this?
Discuss the difference between man's spiritual and fleshly natures.
What happens to these two natures when one is redeemed from sin?
How may one be sure of overcoming his fleshly nature?
Why say that one is not under the law, rather than the flesh, if he is led by the Spirit?
Discuss the relation between the "law" and the "flesh."

The Works of the Flesh versus the Fruit of the Spirit

What was Paul's purpose in this section of our lesson text?
Why refer to "works" in the plural, and "fruit" in the singular?
What lesson should we learn regarding "factions, divisions, parties"?
Analyze the fruit of the Spirit with reference to its application.
Why is there no law against such?
What great blessing comes to those who have the fruit of the Spirit in their lives?

Lesson XIII—June 30, 1963

BEARING ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS

Lesson Text

Gal. 6: 1-10

1 Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

3 For if a man thinketh himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

4 But let each man prove his own work, and then shall he have his glorying in regard of himself alone, and not of his neighbor.

5 For each man shall bear his own burden.

6 But let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

8 For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corrup-

tion; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life.

9 And let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

10 So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith.

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gal. 6: 11-18.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” (Gal. 6: 2.)

Daily Bible Readings

June 24. M.....	Living for Others (Acts 9: 36-43)
June 25. T.....	Loving One’s Neighbor (Luke 10: 25-37)
June 26. W.....	Jesus Ministers to the Suffering (Luke 14: 1-6)
June 27. T.....	Fulfilling the Law of Christ (Gal. 6: 1-10)
June 28. F.....	Pharisees without Compassion (Luke 10-17)
June 29. S.....	Saved Because of Assisting Others (Matt. 25: 31-46)
June 30. S.....	Jesus Bids the Weary Come to Him (Matt. 11: 25-30)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Galatians was written from Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Galatian churches.

Introduction

It was pointed out in the lesson at the beginning of this quarter that Galatians and Romans were written during the same general period; and now as we close the quarter, after having gone through both of the letters, it is easy for us to see that many of the same questions are discussed by the writer in both epistles. Galatians is the most vigorous and vehement of all of Paul’s letters which have come down to us. It has been described as a thunderbolt which he hurled from Corinth. A little later on, and in a calmer mood, he discussed the same general issues more fully in his letter to the Romans. Galatians is more of a personal letter, intended to save some of his friends from wrong religious views and practices; while Romans, on the other hand, partakes more of the nature of a treatise.

It is not necessary to list instances in both the letters which we have been studying this quarter in which the writer discusses the same subject; but it is interesting to note that each chapter from which the final lesson in each epistle is taken considers the question of burden-bearing. In Rom. 15: 1-4 Paul says, “Now we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities

of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each one of us please his neighbor for that which is good, unto edifying. For Christ also pleased not himself; but, as it is written. The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell upon me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope.” This exhortation, which follows his discussion of the weak and the strong in chapter 14, is enforced by the example of Christ and the scriptures. This ought to be enough to show us how important the subject of burden-bearing is in the Christian life.

When the story of human weal and woe comes to be fully told, the part which was played by love, both human and Divine, in helping others carry their loads, will be one of immortal glory. We have all seen the strong take advantage of the weak, in order to have their own way and to gain their own desired end; but we have also seen others with great strength use it to help those who were not able to bear the burdens which had been cast upon their shoulders. If any one doubts the

necessity of being a burden-bearer for Christ's sake, let him read the Lord's own picture of the final judgment, as recorded in Matt. 25: 31-46. "I was hungry, and ye did not give me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer, saying, Lord, when

saw we thee hungry, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me. And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous [those who had done these things] into eternal life."

The Golden Text

This portion of the lesson is found in the principal text, and it will be considered in its proper place.

The Text Explained

The Ministry of the Strong (Gal. 6: 1-5)

Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. This exhortation is in direct contrast with the unbrotherly conduct referred to in the last two verses of chapter 5. "If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk. Let us not become vainglorious, provoking one another, envying one another." No one can live according to this rule, while at the same time manifesting no interest in his brethren.

The term "overtaken" implies that the victim himself is surprised to find himself involved in some trespass, rather than that the temptation was sudden and thereby caught him unawares. The idea, then, is that the person so involved is actually guilty of sin, and not simply the victim of a surprise attack on the part of the tempter. His guilt therefore is real, and the spiritual brethren, that is, those who are living as the Spirit directs (see again Gal. 5: 25, 26), are under obligation to restore, that is, help the offender to correct his error; but they must act in a spirit of humility and due consideration for the sinner, lest they also themselves fall into sin. The transition from the plural (brethren) to the singular (thyself) is very suggestive. The duty of restoring offenders is the obligation of all spiritual brethren, but each individual also needs to consider himself.

The original word for "burden"

in verse 2 is *baros*, and it literally means weight, load, trouble. The bearing of burdens of this kind does not involve the transference of the burden to some one else, but signifies lending a hand to help in lifting a heavy load. The type of burden referred to, as the context indicates, is that of moral infirmities and faults, and the sorrow and shame which they awaken in the offender. This is important in the lesson now before us; for it often happens that the sorrow and shame in which the sin involves one is almost more that the individual can bear. Not all brethren who feel that they are not themselves in some kind of wrongdoing are as sympathetic with those who are as they should be; and then it frequently happens that when the former find themselves involved in some trespass, their feeling toward the unsympathetic is not exactly in keeping with the spirit of Christ. No one in this sinful world is above the possibility of falling into sin and error.

And another thing: Not all people have the same constitutional nature, and consequently, the same needs. People, in fact, may be compared to different plants which require different surroundings or atmospheres. It is often necessary to "humor" some plants, if we would lure them into blossom and flower. Each one must be dealt with according to its own needs and temperaments; and, too, it is sometimes necessary to use medication in order to provide the essential conditions which will make it possible for the plants to deal with their enemies (insects) and throw off their burdens (parasites). It is in this way that we create suit-

able conditions for each plant; and the same principle must be followed in dealing with our brethren who have been overtaken in some trespass. This is implied in the expression "in a spirit of gentleness." Each soul is worth more than the entire world (Matt. 16: 26); and inasmuch as Christ died for all men (Heb. 2: 9), those who are following the leading of the Spirit can and will make every effort possible to save those who are in the clutches of the evil one. (Cf. 2 Tim. 2: 24-26.)

All acceptable obedience must be actuated by a worthy motive; and the motive which must prompt the Christian in the case now before us is plainly stated by Paul—"and so fulfil the law of Christ," which is pre-eminently the law of love. (Cf. John 13: 34, 35; Matt. 7: 12; Rom. 15: 1-3.) The obligation which rests upon those who are spiritual is an essential part of the moral content of Christianity; or, to state the same thing in other words, it is a necessary part of the Christian interpretation of human life. It is in such a situation as this that Christianity makes its most unique and distinctive pronouncement. (Cf. Matt. 25: 31-46.) The old Greek and Roman philosophers said some very fine and noble things about man's own sufferings; but they had comparatively little feeling for the sufferings of others. Such pre-Christian philosophy never knew the deep meaning of sympathy; and it remained for the teaching of Jesus, which is perpetuated in the gospel, to enable men to understand the wider obligations of their common humanity.

For if a man thinketh himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let each man prove his own work, and then shall he have his glorying in regard of himself alone, and not of his neighbor. For each man shall bear his own burden.

Alford notes that the chief hindrance to sympathy with reference to the burdens of others is that of self-conceit; and that is what Paul says must be removed. The Expositor's Greek Testament observes that "any conceit of our own strength or goodness is a vain delusion, for we are nothing. Let no man compare his own with others' work: this will only feed his vanity; but let each

scrutinize his own work. Then, if he finds there ground for rejoicing, it will be in the ability that has been given by God's grace to such a one as he is: for each one will have his own burden to bear of conscious guilt and shame."

The statements made in verses 2 and 5 of the text of this lesson seem to present a contradiction; but when they are carefully considered and taken together, it will be found that they give a brief description of the essence of Christianity—a definition, in few words, of the spirit of the Christian life. The Christian faith is based upon two great underlying principles, which, while not strictly original with it, are, nevertheless, in their higher expression, among the most precious of its gifts to man. They explain at once the mystery and comprehensiveness of its scheme of salvation for the individual Christian; and also the divine beauty and eternal reality of that great ideal of the church as the kingdom of God, a community of souls in which each individual member must bear his own burdens, while all the members are bound together, bearing each other's burdens, and united in him who is the great burden-bearer of humanity, and the head of the church which is his body.

It is impossible therefore to obey one part of this law without obeying the other. No man can bear his own burden without at the same time bearing the burdens of others; and neither can he realize the awful responsibilities of his own being without at the same time realizing the claims of his brethren. No man can find his true life without giving up his own individual will—without merging his personal interests in those of human brotherhood. Thus, when Paul says that "each man shall bear his own burden," he is speaking of the burden which no one can transfer from himself to another. The original term for "burden" in verse 5 is *phortion*, and the idea which is expressed by it is that of a burden which one cannot get rid of, as no soldier on active service can transfer his equipment to some one else. (Cf. Matt. 11: 30; 23: 4; Luke 11: 46, where the same original word is used.)

When God created man, he laid firm and deep the foundation of in-

dividual life and individual character. Every man therefore is responsible for his own being and destiny; and he must bear the burdens which belong to his individual lot. For example: there is the burden of *physical disability or disfigurement*, such as lameness, blindness, or deformity of any kind. Such a burden is always a grievous thing to bear, but it must be borne, nevertheless. (Cf. 2 Cor. 12: 7, 8.) And, too, there is the burden of *intellectual weakness*. Not all men have the same mental capacity. Some excel others in acquiring knowledge, or in the range of vision and foresight; and notwithstanding the diligent efforts put forth by those who are less fortunate, they find themselves outdistanced by those with keener intellect and greater foresight. They may think that this is a hard lot, and it may be so; but they must bear the burden of their own defects as best they can. There is also the burden of some permanent or far-reaching *consequence of a former act of our own*, such as neglect, recklessness, or sin. The sin may have been forgiven, but the temporal consequence will continue. (Cf. 1 Tim. 1: 12-15.) Such burdens cannot be lifted from the shoulders of God's children, but the Lord has promised that they shall be sustained in carrying them. (See 1 Cor. 10: 13; 2 Cor. 12: 9, 10.)

While it is true that by bearing our own burdens we learn better how to bear those of others, it is also true that we are better fitted to bear our own burdens when we bear the burdens of our fellow Christians. This is the moral paradox of our being. If we are sinking beneath the weight of our own burdens, then let us courageously shoulder the burdens of our neighbor, and the two will be incomparably lighter than our own alone. The measure of our love to each other must be the love that Christ showed to us. (Cf. 1 John 3: 16; 4: 20, 21; John 13: 34, 35.) With this in mind, no Christian can say, "I have done enough for my fellow man; I have loved enough; I have forgiven enough."

The Inexorable Law of the Harvest

(Gal. 6: 6-8)

But let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not

deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap eternal life.

This appears to be another instance where Paul briefly mentions a subject, and then gives a fuller discussion in the book of Romans. In this place he seemingly is speaking of the mutual responsibility of the teacher and those who are taught. The following translations of verse 6 should enable us to get the point which Paul aims to make known. "Now let him, who is instructed in the word, communicate of all good things to the instructor." (The Living Oracles.) "When any one is under instruction in the faith, he should give his teacher a share of all good things he has." (The New English Bible.) "Those who are taught must share all the blessings of life with those who teach them the Word." (Moffatt.)

Any one who will take the time to read that which Paul says in other parts of his writings will have no difficulty in seeing that this was his teaching regarding the question, although he made it plain that he did not always take advantage if the responsibility which rested upon the shoulders of those whom he taught. (See 1 Cor. 9: 1-18.) But the idea which Paul is emphasizing in the passage now under consideration is that of responsibility on the part of those who have received a blessing from others in the Lord's service; and this is the way that he stressed the matter when he wrote to the Romans: "For it hath been the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints that are at Jerusalem. Yea, it hath been their good pleasure; 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 to them in carnal things." (Rom. 15: 26, 27.) That which has been said will become more apparent when it is remembered that in both letters Paul was dealing with the relation between the Jewish and Gentile Christians, and especially with reference to the activities of the Judaizers. And so, in the passage now before us, the apostle continues his protest against the arrogant pre-

tensions and selfish exclusiveness of the disturbers of the peace in the churches of Galatia.

And then to enforce that which he has said in verse 6, Paul reminds his readers that it is impossible to outwit God; for he knows all the thoughts and intents of the heart. Frederic Rendall states the matter in this way: "Every action produces an effect on the character of the actor corresponding as exactly to its motive as the fruit to the seed. If it springs from selfish desire, it stimulates the growth of evil lusts, and issues in a harvest of inward corruption. If, on the contrary, it be done in obedience to the Spirit, it quickens spiritual growth, and issues eventually in a harvest of eternal life. The heart of man resembles a field in which he sows, by the mere exercise of his will, a future harvest of good or evil." This should be an impressive lesson to us. It is true that we are not concerned today primarily with Judaizers, but that does not affect the motive which must actuate our deeds, if we are pleasing to the Lord. Let us then make sure that we are not sowing to the flesh, but that we are, in response to the teaching of the Spirit, making a sincere effort to discharge our responsibility with reference to our obligations to them who are making it possible for us to enjoy God's blessings.

Some Hortatory Conclusions

(Gal. 6: 9, 10)

And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

In what way are the letters to the Galatians and the Romans related?
In what ways do they differ from each other?
How is the question of "burden-bearing" related to the Christian life?
Why is this an important study?

The Ministry of the Strong

Give the setting of the exhortation in verse 1 of our lesson text.

This section of our lesson for today, along with the two preceding sections, is directly related to the injunction found in the closing part of chapter 5. Paul had warned the Galatian brethren that they could not please God while walking after the flesh, and then showed them what the fruit of the Spirit is; and then adds, "If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk." The rules of conduct set forth in 6: 1-10 are those which the Spirit enjoins; and so, as a kind of summary, Paul exhorts, "And let us not be weary in well-doing," that is, in sowing unto the Spirit; "for in due season," at the time of harvest, "we shall reap, if we faint not," that is, if we do not relax our efforts, and become exhausted as a result of our giving in to evil. (Cf. Matt. 15: 32; Mark 8: 3; Heb. 12: 3, 5, for other instances of the use of the term "faint.")

Just as there is a proper time for reaping, there is also a proper season for sowing; and as this season comes to us, let us take advantage of it by sowing to the Spirit, which, in its practical meaning, means to do that which is good. Such opportunities come to Christian people practically every day, and they are exhorted to take advantage of them. We are obligated to all men, but in a special way to our brethren. "The household of the faith" is the same as "the household of God" (Eph. 2: 19), that is, the church. This exhortation was addressed to "churches" as such, and not to individual Christians; and it is therefore easy to see that congregations, as well as individual Christians, have an obligation to all men, both, Christians and those who are not, with the preference, of course, to those who are the Lord's people.

What is implied in the term "overtaken"?
What, then, is the duty of spiritual men toward those who have sinned?
Who are the "spiritual"?
What spirit must be manifested in the work of restoration?
Why is this essential?
In what way may people bear the burdens of others?
What is the spiritual advantage of such service?
Illustrate why the spirit of gentleness is needed in this work.
What is the relationship between motive and acceptable service?
What is the motive for restoring those who have fallen into sin?

What is the chief hindrance to a sympathetic attitude toward those who have been overtaken in any trespass?

What exhortation does Paul give regarding this?

Discuss the relationship of "burden-bearing" as set forth in verses 2 and 5.

Why is it impossible to obey one part of this law without obeying the other?

What are some of the burdens which we must bear ourselves?

What burdens may others help us bear?

Are there any burdens which fellow Christians cannot help others bear? Give reason for your answer.

What advantages accrue from mutual burden-bearing?

The Inexorable Law of the Harvest

What is the practical meaning of the exhortation in verse 6?

Why is it essential to communicate in such a manner?

In what way is this duty related to the over-all effort which Paul made against the Judaizers?

What is said regarding the question of sowing and reaping?

In what sense is God not mocked?

What lesson should we learn from this for our day?

In the light of this, what is our responsibility?

Some Hortatory Conclusions

In what are we not to become weary?

Why did Paul give these exhortations?

When will the reaping time come for good works?

What duty, then, must we never neglect?

Show that the church has a responsibility in this, as well as individual Christians.

What is the household of the faith?

What distinction should be made in benevolent work, if any is necessary?



Read the Bible Through

I suppose I knew my Bible,
 Reading piece-meal, hit or miss;
 Now a bit of "John" or "Matthew,"
 Now a snatch of "Genesis,"
 Certain chapters of "Isaiah,"
 Certain "Psalms," — the twenty-third,
 Twelfth of "Romans," first of "Proverbs."
 Yes, I thought I knew the Word.
 But I found a thorough reading
 Was a different thing to do,
 And the way was unfamiliar
 When I read the Bible through.
 Ye who treat the Crown of Writings
 As you treat no other book—
 Just a paragraph disjointed,
 Just a crude, impatient look—
 Try a worthier procedure,
 Try a broad and steady view;
 You will kneel in every rapture
 When you read the Bible THROUGH.

— Amos R. Wells

THIRD QUARTER

PAUL'S LETTERS TO THE CHURCH IN CORINTH

(Six Months' Course)

AIM.—To increase our knowledge of these great Epistles, and to note the power of truth to lift people of pagan origin and unworthy conduct to a high plateau of noble Christian living.

Lesson I—July 7, 1963

PAUL WRITES TO THE CHURCH IN CORINTH

Lesson Text

1 Cor. 1: 1-15

1 Paul, called to *be* an apostle of Je'-sus Christ through the will of God, and Sos'-the-nes our brother,

2 Unto the church of God which is at Cor'-inth, *even* them that are sanctified in Christ Je'-sus, called to *be* saints, with all that call upon the name of our Lord Je'-sus Christ in every place, their *Lord* and ours:

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Je'-sus Christ.

4 I thank my God always concerning you, for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Je'-sus;

5 That in everything ye were enriched in him, in all utterance and all knowledge;

6 Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you:

7 So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the revelation of our Lord Je'-sus Christ;

8 Who shall also confirm you unto the end, *that ye be* unreprouvable in the day of our Lord Je'-sus Christ.

9 God is faithful, through whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Je'-sus Christ our Lord.

10 Now I beseech you, brethren, 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-pol'-los; 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'-ius;

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

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Is Christ divided?" (1 Cor. 1: 13.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Cor. 1: 18-30.

Daily Bible Readings

July 1. M.....	Paul Visits Corinth (Acts 18: 1-4)
July 2. T.....	Paul Preaches in Corinth (Acts 18: 5-11)
July 3. W.....	People Paul Baptized in Corinth (1 Cor. 1: 14-17)
July 4. T.....	"The Foolishness of God" (1 Cor. 1: 18-25)
July 5. F.....	God Chooses the Weak (1 Cor. 1: 26-28)
July 6. S.....	All Men Need the Gospel (Rom. 2: 1-16)
July 7. S.....	Gospel God's Power to Save (Rom. 1: 13-17)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—First Corinthians was written from Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

People today often become discouraged at the very thoughts of trying

to establish a church where conditions are not favorable, but if they

will take a look at Corinth, they will not only see a situation far worse than those which are usually encountered today; they will also see a living demonstration of what the gospel can do under very unfavorable conditions. (Read again the aim of this quarter's lessons.) The old city of Corinth, said to have been founded in 1350 B. C., was destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C. After lying in ruins for exactly one hundred years, it was rebuilt by Julius Caesar in 46 B.C. He made it a Roman colony, and later on Augustus made it the capital of Greece (Achaia). The city was built on the narrow isthmus which connected the Peloponnesus with the mainland. This isthmus was between the Aegean and Ionian seas, and, as would be expected, the city had two harbors—Cenchreae on the east, for ships to and from Asia, and Lechaeum on the west, for ships to and from Italy. The city, in Paul's day, was making the most of its strategic commercial position, and was well on its way to becoming the metropolis of Greece and its richest city.

In addition to its commercial prosperity and architectural splendor, Corinth was also noted for its interest in literature and the arts, especially the study of rhetoric and philosophy; but it was notorious for its luxury and moral corruption, particularly for its voluptuous and vicious worship of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and beauty, also identified by the Romans as Venus. Corinth therefore became a notorious seat of immorality. The chastity of our time, as some one has observed, does not permit us to speak of the profligacy and licentiousness which

characterized that hot-bed of vice, along with its richly endowed temple of Venus which, according to Strabo, supported a thousand priestesses dedicated to immorality, so that even in that dark, heathen age, Corinth had a bad name. It has been called the Vanity Fair of the Roman Empire.

When Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans, in which he recounted the appalling list of vices in the latter part of the first chapter (verses 21-32), he had never seen the city of Rome; but he had lived approximately a year and a half in Corinth! Paganism was a hideous reality there; for, as already observed, Greek religion implemented and channeled sensual vices, commercializing them under the guise of worship. So vicious were their practices that it was said, "To live like a Corinthian" was a synonym for abandonment to immorality. The population, at the time of Paul's stay there, was about four hundred thousand, and was made up chiefly of Romans, Greeks, Jews, and Orientals. It appears from 1 Cor. 12: 2 that the church in Corinth was composed largely of Gentiles, possibly Greeks. All in all, Corinth was a stirring center of contemporary life, the meeting place of the east and west, where Greeks and Romans, along with some Jews, Orientals, and possibly others, were deeply absorbed in the business and pleasures of the world. So far as we know, Paul went there alone; and when we think of how little he impressed his hearers in the marketplace and the Areopagus in Athens, only about forty miles away, there is little reason to wonder that he went to Corinth "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." (1 Cor. 2: 3.)

The Golden Text

This portion of our study is found in the lesson text, and will be considered in its due order.

The Text Explained

Apostolic Address and Greeting

(1 Cor. 1: 1-3)

Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, even them, that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, their Lord and ours: Grace to you

and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

It should be kept in mind that at the time Paul wrote the four letters which we are studying during the last half of the year his apostleship was called in question by his opponents, and in each instance he stressed the fact that his call to that office was a divine one. The New English Bible puts it this way: "From Paul,

apostle of Jesus Christ at God's call and by God's will." The italicized words "to be" have no corresponding term in the original. Paul was a *called* apostle. We have no further information regarding the identity of Sosthenes; he may or may not have been the Sosthenes of Acts 18: 17. He was with Paul at the time he wrote this letter to the Corinthians, and joined in the greeting; but other than that, he appears to have had nothing more to do with the epistle.

"The church of God which is at Corinth" included all the Christians who lived there, regardless of whether or not they all met at the same place. The term "church" is used in the following senses in the New Testament: (1) *In a general sense.* (Cf. Eph. 1: 22, 23.) The term, in this sense, embraces all the saved, all *the called out*, in all the world. A physical assembly is not necessary; for a family is a family, whether all the members are gathered in one place or not. (Cf. 1 Tim. 3: 15; Acts 8: 3.) Robertson observes that the word came to mean an "unassembled assembly." (2) *With geographical limitations.* (See Acts 8: 1; 9: 31.) Here the essential idea is the same as when applied to the whole body of God's people in all the world, that is, it embraces all the saved, all *the called out*, in the territory named. (3) *In a local sense.* (See Rom. 16: 3-5; Col. 4: 15; Phile. 2.) The reference in this sense is to a body of people banded together for work and worship, and meeting together in one place. Membership in such congregations is not determined by geographical bounds, but by various circumstances, such as convenience, opportunities for greater service, etc. The church of Christ on Fifth Avenue does not necessarily refer to Christians living on Fifth Avenue; but rather to those who regularly meet on that avenue for worship, even though none of them live on it.

Just as Paul was a "a called apostle," just so were the Corinthian Christians *called saints*, that is they were people who were consecrated to the Lord, by virtue of their obedience to the gospel. It is unfortunate that this designation has a significance attached to it today which is different from its simple Bible meaning. Many people think

of the term "saint" only in connection with those who are reputed to be superior in goodness and those who, after death, have been canonized by the Roman Catholic Church. As used in the New Testament, the word means those "set apart for God, to be, as it were, exclusively his." (Thayer. Cf. John 17: 14-16; 1 Pet. 2: 9; 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20.) The word does not carry with it the idea of sinless perfection, but rather the idea of holy living (2 Pet. 3: 11) and a standard of conduct which will encourage the culture of godlikeness. (Cf. Phil. 4: 21; 1: 27.)

Paul's usual salutation is that of grace and peace, with the exception of his two letters to Timothy where he adds mercy. This is not a commonplace greeting as Robertson points out, but one which bears "the stamp of Paul's experience," old words which had been "deepened and spiritualized."

Conciliatory Preamble

(1 Cor. 1: 4-9)

I thank my God always concerning you, for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus; that in everything ye were enriched in him, in all utterance and all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye be unreprouvable in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, through whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Someone has observed that the thanksgiving of Paul in this part of his epistle is, in view of that which is to follow, an amazing disclosure of his invincible confidence in the power of "the grace of God." In these few verses, the apostle begins with the conversion of the Corinthian brethren, along with the miraculous confirmation of the message which was preached to them and the endowment of spiritual gifts which they received; all of which placed them in the very forefront of the Lord's people at that time. He also pictured to them the future when they would be with Christ at his coming; and he assured them that his confidence in their ultimate welfare depended upon God's fidelity.

To be called into the fellowship of Christ is equivalent to becoming members of the church, which is his body; and we learn from 2 Thess. 2: 13, 14 just how that was done. "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, 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." The gospel is God's power unto salvation to those who believe; and it is in the gospel that God's righteousness is revealed. (See Rom. 1: 16, 17; 10: 1-3; cf. John 6: 44, 45.)

After God calls people into the fellowship of his Son, we may be sure that he will leave nothing undone to make sure that those who are saved will remain so, and that they will have a home with him in the world which is to come. This is clearly set forth in the eighth chapter of Romans, which should be carefully read often. The only thing which will result in the condemnation of those who have been redeemed in Christ is their own unfaithfulness. (Cf. 2 Tim. 2: 10-13.) "There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye make be able to endure it." (1 Cor. 10: 13.) The faithfulness of God is both sure and steadfast.

It is very clear that Paul's purpose in this section of our lesson was to condition the mind of the brethren for that which was to come later. Practically the entire letter is devoted to an effort to get the Corinthian brethren back on "the right track." As we read this epistle, we are permitted to see the problems which confronted them and, in many instances, their failure to meet them in the Christian way. Scenes of strife, the evils of party names, and the resulting sectarian animosities are all brought before us in bold relief. In some respects this is one of the greatest letters that has ever been written, and it is certain that no other letter which Paul wrote gives so detailed and vivid a picture of Christianity at work in a heathen

city. Someone has said that Paul's epistles enable us to remove the roof from the meeting places of the early Christians and look on the inside; and we may be sure that no other letter which we have from him does this more or better than the one we are now considering. Paul wanted them to do right, and he was ready to conciliate them as much as possible before attempting to correct their errors. (Cf. 1 Cor. 11: 2.)

An Appeal for Unity (1 Cor. 1: 10-15)

Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus 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. One has only to read the Book of First Corinthians in order to see the wide range of subjects over which the brethren in Corinth were divided. It would be impossible for any one to study the New Testament, either from the standpoint of its letter or its spirit, without reaching the conclusion that God intends for all his children to be one in Christ. And so, in the text now before us, Paul pleads with his brethren in Corinth "through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" to speak the same thing. This is the tenth time, in as many verses, that the apostle has mentioned the name of Christ. He did, as someone has suggested, literally tie them to Christ, as he endeavored to get them to change their thinking, and, consequently, their action.

One of the cardinal doctrines of the New Testament is the unity of all believers in Christ. Jesus does not teach any conflicting doctrines; and no one can be pleasing to him who either teaches or adheres to such. Division among the followers of Christ is condemned by inspired writers in no uncertain terms; and every one who is responsible for such a state of affairs is nowhere left in doubt as to what his eternal portion shall be. (Cf. Rom. 16: 17; Gal. 5: 19-21.) It is next to useless however, to call upon the religious world to unite, while those who claim to stand upon the Bible alone ignore its teaching regarding this question. Many of the passages which brethren use to condemn sectarian di-

vision, as that expression is generally understood, were written primarily for the purpose of correcting internal conditions of churches of Christ. It is proper, of course, to try to get all people to unite in Christ, but if the Lord's people want to be effective in that plea, they should first make an honest effort to set their own house in order.

Those who are familiar with the teaching of the New Testament know, of course, that all division is not wrong. Paul made this clear in 1 Cor. 11: 17-19: "But in giving you this charge, I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also factions among you, that they that are approved may be made manifest among you." The New English Bible renders verse 19, parenthetically, in these words: "For dissensions are necessary if only to show which of your members are sound." This does not mean that it is right to create division, but rather that it is sometimes necessary in order to show the difference between right and wrong. (Cf. 1 John 2: 19.) And then, on the other hand, there are divisions which result from doing the right thing, as may be seen by reading Matt. 10: 34-37. No one is justified in rejecting the truth, or even compromising any part of it, in order to have peace with those who are not in sympathy with the Lord's teaching, either because of their outright rejection of it or because they fail to understand it.

For it hath been signified unto me concerning you, my brethren, by them that are of the household of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I mean, that each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Nothing further is known of Chloe or her household, nor do we know just how the information regarding the divided condition of the church in Corinth was transmitted to Paul. The apostle, however, regarded the information as authentic, and he wanted the Corinthians to know from whom he received it and how he felt about it. Paul's concern was not simply to have the information regarding them, but he wanted

to take advantage of the opportunity to try to correct the offenders. Some brethren merely want to use that which they hear regarding others as a means of gossip or condemnation; they never make an effort, in the spirit of Christ, to try to get those who may be guilty of wrongdoing to change their ways for the better.

It is quite possible that the Greek love for faction was showing itself in the Corinthian church. The followers of Apollos were probably those who preferred his philosophical and rhetorical preaching to the simpler and more direct manner in which Paul presented his message. (Cf. Acts 18: 24-28; 1 Cor. 2: 1, 2.) Cephas was the Aramaic for Peter, and his name was probably used as the rallying-point for the Judaizing Christians, who claimed him as the apostle of the circumcision. (Cf. Gal. 2: 7-9.) There is no evidence that Apollos and Peter approved the attitude of those who claimed to be their disciples, any more than Paul did. The manner in which Paul mentions Christ here apparently indicates that those who claimed to follow him were doing so in a party spirit. (Cf. 2 Cor. 10: 7.) The context of the passage just cited clearly implies that they were not in sympathy with Paul; and since there is no question about his being of Christ, then it follows that they were not, in the true sense of the term. (Cf. Luke 10: 16.)

*Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized into the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, save Crispus and Gaius; lest any man should say that ye were baptized into my name. Instead of the interrogatory form—"Is Christ divided?"—Vincent points out that some of the best expositors render the expression as an assertion, namely, "Christ has been divided by your controversies." He then goes on to say that this gives a perfectly good and forcible sense, and is favored by the absence of the interrogatory particle *me*, which introduces the next clause. The interrogatory form does not occur in the Greek text of Westcott and Hort, which is one of the best. The clause regarding Paul's being crucified for them and their having been baptized into his name is a part of a separate sentence in*

Westcott and Hort, and is in the form of a question, being preceded by the particle *me*, which demands an emphatic "No."

But whatever may be the truth regarding this, the whole idea on the part of Paul was to make the Corinthians see how absurd and wicked their party spirit and practices were. This should be an impressive lesson to us today; for it is very obvious that many are following in the footsteps of the Corinthians. Paul did

not say that he was thankful that the Corinthian brethren had not been baptized, but, as Moffatt renders the statement, "I am thankful now that I baptized none of you, except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say you were baptized in my name." Both the brethren and preachers should make honest efforts to see that this condition is not repeated today, that is, the condition of the Corinthian church in its attitude toward preachers.

Questions for Discussion

- What great encouragement should we get from Paul's work in Corinth?
- Give some facts regarding that city.
- What was the general moral condition of the people there?
- Why did the situation there present such a great opportunity?
- What was Paul's attitude when he went there?
- What lesson should we learn from all this?

Apostolic Address and Greeting

- Why did Paul emphasize his apostolic office in so many of his letters?
- What did he say regarding his apostleship?
- Discuss the New Testament use of the term "church."
- How did Paul speak of the Corinthian brethren?
- What is the meaning of the term "saint"?
- What was Paul's usual salutation when writing to the brethren?

Conciliatory Preamble

- What is implied in Paul's thanksgiving of this section of our lesson?
- What did he say regarding their experience as Christians?
- What does it mean to be called into the fellowship of Christ?
- How are people called into that relationship?
- What promise has God made concerning his people in Christ?

- What should God's "faithfulness" always mean to us?
- What was Paul's purpose in writing this section of our lesson?
- What important lesson should we learn from it?

An Appeal for Unity

- Why was there such a need for this kind of an appeal to the Corinthian brethren?
- What is God's will regarding the unity of his people?
- Why did Paul mention the name of Christ so often in the first part of his letter?
- What does the New Testament say regarding division among Christians?
- Give several reasons why this lesson is important to us?
- Under what circumstances will God look with favor upon division among brethren?
- Who, then, will be responsible for such division?
- In what way did Paul get his information regarding the divided condition of the Corinthian Christians?
- What was his attitude toward this information?
- What lesson should we learn from this?
- Why were the brethren in Corinth divided into so many factions?
- What significant statement and questions did Paul put to them?
- What was his purpose in this?
- Why did he say that he was thankful that he had not baptized many of them?
- In what way may this same situation be repeated today?

Lesson II—July 14, 1963

TRUE AND FALSE WISDOM

Lesson Text

1 Cor. 2: 1-12

1 And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.

2 For I determined not to know anything among you, save Je-sus Christ, and him crucified.

3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.

4 And my speech and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

6 We speak wisdom, however, among them that are fullgrown: yet a wisdom not of this world, nor of

the rulers of this world, who are coming to nought:

7 But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, *even* the *wisdom* that hath been hidden, which God foreordained before the worlds unto our glory:

8 Which none of the rulers of this world hath known: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory:

9 But as it is written,
Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not,

And *which* entered not into the heart of man,

Whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him.

10 But unto us God revealed *them* through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

11 For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God.

12 But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men."* (1 Cor. 1: 25.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Cor. 2: 13-16.

Daily Bible Readings

- July 8. M.....How the Scriptures Are Inspired (1 Cor. 2: 12-16)
- July 9. T.....The Mind of Christ (Phil. 2: 1-11)
- July 10. W.....Know Nothing But the Cross (Gal. 6: 12-18)
- July 11. T.....Wisdom from Above Pure (James 3: 13-18)
- July 12. F.....Ask God for Wisdom (James 1: 5-8)
- July 13. S.....Ear Inclined to Wisdom (Prov. 2: 1-10)
- July 14. S.....A Wise Son (Prov. 3: 1-20)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—First Corinthians was written from Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

The Bible abounds in teaching regarding the true nature of wisdom, teaching which even professed followers of Christ do not take seriously. "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do his commandments." (Psalm 111: 10.) This means that to be truly wise, one must make an honest effort to understand the will of God. No one can fear, that is, have the proper attitude toward Jehovah, without striving to know and to do his will. Thus Solomon says, "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." (Prov. 9: 10.) The verse just before the one just quoted says, "Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning." (Prov. 9: 9.)

The practical meaning of wisdom is stated by James in these words: "Who is wise and understanding among you? let him show by his good life his works in meekness of wis-

dom. But if ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart, glory not and lie not against the truth. This wisdom is not a wisdom that cometh down from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace." (James 3: 13-18.)

As anyone who reads what James says regarding wisdom can see, the sense in which he uses the term is essentially the same as that already observed in the Old Testament. And when one considers the fact that James exhorts those in need of it to pray for wisdom, it is easy to see that wisdom is wholly distinguishable from mere knowledge, which is information stored up in the mind and

which has been gained by study, observation, and experience. A man may spend a lifetime in mastering many fields of learning, and then have no wisdom; while, on the other hand, a person who can barely read may be a man of wisdom. The wise man has discovered the truth regarding the world and God's will for living in it. He knows that for him

and all other responsible people God's will, as revealed in his word, is supreme; and he has therefore both the ability and the habit of forming accurate judgments regarding the values and issues of life. He has, in a word, a clear vision of the law which must regulate acceptable conduct, and of the principles which form noble character.

The Golden Text

"Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." These words are a part of Paul's argument regarding the paradox of the cross, as set forth in 1 Cor. 1: 18-31; and which, in turn, is a section of the over-all effort to show the Corinthians and all others the folly and positive sin of division, contained in 1 Cor. 1: 10-4: 21. It has already been pointed out that Paul tied them to the name of Christ, as it were, before beginning his discussion of the evils of division; and now he proposes to show that both the Jews and the Gentiles had missed the point regarding the meaning of true wisdom, and, consequently, the basis for the unity of all of God's people. His words are:

"For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. For it is written,

I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,

And the discernment of the discerning will I bring to nought.

Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe. Seeing that Jews ask for signs, and Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified unto Jews a

stumbling-block, and unto Gentiles foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." (1 Cor. 1: 18-25.)

The practical meaning of this is that neither the Jews nor the Gentiles could ever discover the wisdom of God by their own methods, however adequate they may have been so far as worldly wisdom was concerned. It remained therefore for God to *reveal* his will for the race, along with the method of salvation, through "the foolishness of the preaching," which, of course, was inspired preaching. This fact will be emphasized further on in our study today. The result of all this is that everything which pertains to our salvation is to be found in Christ, and that we have access to these blessings only by faith in God's scheme of human redemption. (Cf. Rom. 1: 16, 17; John 6: 44, 45.) No man can reason himself into the favor of God: all people must be taught the way of truth or true wisdom. (See 1 Cor. 1: 26-31.) The last two verses cited say, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." We are dependent entirely upon the Lord for our salvation. (Cf. Tit. 3: 3-7.)

The Text Explained

God's Wisdom Exemplified in Paul's Preaching

(1 Cor. 2: 1-5)

And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming unto you the testimony of God. For

I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of

power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

It is possible that the determination which Paul refers to in the text now before us was occasioned by his experience with the philosophers in Athens, but that certainly was not the basic reason for it. That which he says in chapter 2 is directly connected with the preceding chapter; and when we consider the fact that the gospel which Paul preached was not philosophy and the Corinthians were not philosophers, it is easy to see why he began his work in Corinth as he did. He stated the matter plainly in verse 17 of chapter 1; "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not in wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made void." Paul's whole purpose was to exalt Christ, while keeping himself entirely in the background.

The manner of Paul's preaching therefore was determined by its subject matter; and with such a commission as he had received, he could not adopt the arts of a rhetorician nor the airs of a philosopher. Instead, he conducted himself as a messenger of God, and depended upon his power to convince his hearers that his message was divine. (Cf. 1 Cor. 1: 6.) This explains Paul's matter-of-fact delivery. His experience in Athens may have emphasized this attitude, but it certainly did not originate his resolution to know nothing among the Corinthians, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. One needs only to read Paul's first recorded sermon (Acts 13: 16-41), and his two previous letters to the Thessalonians, in order to see the kind of preaching he normally did.

When we consider the fact that obedience to Christ is indispensable to salvation, it is easy to see how important it is for gospel preaching to cause men to turn to him with all their hearts. Their faith must be in Christ, and not in the wisdom of men. We saw in our last lesson how sinful it is for professed Christians to follow after their "favorite preachers," and any preacher whose sole aim is to please the Lord will discourage any such practice on the part of those who have any such disposition. It is proper and right for people to show their appreciation

to those who have taught them the truth; but they must understand that the purpose of the teaching was to lead them to Christ. (1 Cor. 11: 1.)

To know Christ, and him crucified, is to know the meaning of life and the way of salvation. The cross of Christ throws light upon the problem of human suffering, a problem which practically every human being has to contend with. Christ has not diminished the suffering which men must endure, but he has given to it a new and nobler meaning. It no longer appears to be the result of God's wrath, but rather the purifier of the soul. We also learn from the cross of Christ something of the meaning of self-sacrifice; for it was only by the sacrifice of himself that Christ made it possible for men to be saved from sin. And it is this power to give without counting the cost to one's self, this power of suffering and sacrifice, which is the secret of all that is implied in the work of redemption.

It is in the cross that we learn the meaning of sin. This is one proposition which human philosophy has never been able to explain, and even the Bible itself does not define it formally in all of its completeness; but when we look at the cross we are made to see that it is so terrible that only the suffering and death of God's only Son can free people from its clutches. "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. 5: 21.) It is also in the cross that we can understand something of the meaning of victory over failure. Looking at the question from the standpoint of the world, Christ was crucified because he had not succeeded in his mission (cf. 2 Cor. 13: 4), but the cross was only the beginning of an endless victory for the cause of truth in this world.

There are successes which are more tragic than any failure, and there are failures which are more glorious than any success; and it was in keeping with this principle that Jesus went on by the way of the cross to power and influence and glory. And only those who are willing to take up their cross, and follow him, can reach the home with God in the world to come. (Cf. Matt. 16: 24.) The history of all that is best in this

life is but one continuous illustration of the way of the cross; and it was for this reason that Paul could say, "But far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Gal. 6: 14.)

The Wisdom of God versus That of the World

(1 Cor. 2: 6-9)

We speak wisdom, however, among them that are fullgrown; yet a wisdom not of this world, nor of the rulers of this world, who are coming to nought: but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, even the wisdom that hath been hidden, which God foreordained before the worlds unto our glory: which none of the rulers of this world hath known: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory: but as it is written,

*Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not,
And which entered not into the heart of man,
Whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him.*

The Greek love of philosophy probably caused some of the Corinthian brethren to feel that Paul's remarks in 1 Cor. 1: 18-25 clearly showed that he disparaged all wisdom, but his purpose in those statements was intended to point out to them that the gospel which he preached was not based upon the wisdom of men. Our word "philosophy" literally means the love of wisdom; and when we think of it in its truest sense, it is easy to see that Christianity is the embodiment of the greatest of principles, and the word of the cross has behind it the most sublime philosophy. And so Paul told the Corinthians that he did indeed speak wisdom, but it was to people who were more matured than they were. (Cf. 1 Cor. 3: 1ff.) These words must have dealt a heavy blow to their pride, but it sometimes happens that the sting of irony is the best thing that can happen to those whose thinking is leading them in the wrong direction. A wise teacher knows how to adapt his instruction to the capacities of his hearers; and that is what Paul does in dealing with those for whom he is responsible. Teachers today should

learn well this lesson, and should apply it with diligence.

In contrasting the wisdom of God with that of the world, Paul refers to certain *rulers* who are coming to nought. Bible students are not agreed regarding the identity of these rulers. Some hold that they were the same as "the world-rulers of this darkness" (Eph. 6: 12), while others think that they were the Roman governors and the Jewish Sanhedrin who treated the Divine wisdom of the gospel with sovereign contempt. (Cf. Acts 4: 25-30.) Verse 8 of the text now before us seems to confirm the latter viewpoint. All wisdom of men, regardless of where it may be found, will ultimately be brought to nothing; "for my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa. 55: 8, 9; cf. 1 Sam. 16: 7; 1 Cor. 3: 18-20.)

The "mystery" in which Paul spoke had reference to the gospel plan of salvation before it was revealed. The apostles were the Lord's plenipotentiary ministers who were charged with making known his will to men. "But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

"We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God." (2 Cor. 5: 18-20.) The quotation of verse 9 is apparently from Isa. 64: 4; cf. Isa. 65: 17, but Paul takes only the general idea from the Old Testament passage. Many people today apply the words to the future blessings in heaven, but verse 10 makes it clear that Paul's purpose was to use them to describe the blessings of the gospel. They are, of course, true of the future home with God, but that was not what Paul had under consideration. The practical meaning is that no one ever so much as thought of the things which God had in store for his people in Christ. (Cf. Col. 2: 2, 3.) Paul was

replying to his "cultured critics" in Corinth who found his message inferior to their "wisdom"; and he did so by showing that the ordinary powers of discernment, however disciplined and refined they may be, are not capable of receiving the mysteries of God.

The Manner in Which God's Wisdom
Is Made Known
(1 Cor. 2: 10-12)

But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? even so the things of God none knoweth save the Spirit of God. But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God.

The mysteries of God, which were completely unknown to the human mind, were revealed; and it was then that they ceased to be mysteries. That which is revealed becomes a revelation; and so in order to understand them, one needs only to learn that which has been made known. This is not to say that there are no difficulties in the Bible, for that is not true (cf. 2 Pet. 3: 15, 16); but it does mean that man is able by diligent search to understand that which God wants him to know. The Holy Spirit is the Divine Agent through whom the revelation was made, and his capability for such a task is made known in these words: "For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God," which means that the Spirit fully comprehends the depths of God's nature and

his plans for saving the race; and is therefore fully competent to make the revelation which is here claimed.

The illustration in verse 11 shows why it was necessary that this revelation be made by the Spirit; and verse 12 affirms that the apostles had the Spirit, and were therefore able to know, as well as to make known, that which God has given to his people. Jesus, on the night of his betrayal, made this prediction: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come." (John 16: 13.)

The terms "revelation" and "inspiration" are sometimes confused, with the result that neither is clear to the mind. *Revelation* is that which God disclosed to certain individuals; whereas, *inspiration* is the method by which those disclosures were made known to others. *Revelation* is that body of truth which God made known to men by miraculous means; *inspiration* is that inexplicable influence of the Holy Spirit which enabled the men who wrote the Bible to record that which God wanted men to know, as well as to speak orally (Acts 2: 4), and to keep them from all error and omission. *Revelation* is that truth which man could learn, only as God revealed it to him, whereas, *inspiration* is the Divine influence which enabled the original writers of the Scriptures to transcribe (see 1 Pet. 1: 10-12; Acts 2: 29) what God wanted preserved in his Word, and to embody it correctly in human language. *Revelation* deals with the *what*; *inspiration*, deals with the *how*.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What is the basic meaning of the term "wisdom"?
Cite some examples of this meaning from the Old Testament.
What is the general teaching of the New Testament regarding the question?
Why is the subject of "wisdom" such an important topic?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstance did Paul write the words of the golden text?
How does his mention of the matter fit into his general discussion of division?
What must we always depend on for discovering the wisdom and power of God?

God's Wisdom Exemplified in Paul's Preaching

What was Paul's attitude when he went to Corinth the first time?
What was behind the "determination" which he made?

What is implied in knowing only Christ, and him crucified?
 Give some examples of Paul's attitude along this line?
 Why has that kind of preaching always been so important?
 What are some of the motives which preachers might have for preaching otherwise?
 What are some of the effects the cross of Christ has on our lives?
 What do we learn from it regarding self-sacrifice?
 In what way is the subject of sin related to the cross of Christ?
 What is the best way of learning the true meaning of victory over failure?
 What was Christ's own attitude toward the cross?
 What is the place of cross-bearing in our lives?

The Wisdom of God versus That of the World

Why was it necessary for Paul to contrast the wisdom of God with that of the world?
 What pointed statement did he make to the Corinthians regarding his preaching?
 What effect did it probably have on them?

What does a wise teacher always try to do with reference to his subject matter?
 Who probably were the rulers to whom Paul referred?
 Why will all human wisdom finally come to nought?
 In what sense did the apostles speak God's wisdom in a mystery?
 What things are referred to in verse 9 of the text now before us?
 How do we know that this is true?
 What was Paul's purpose in mentioning them?

The Manner in Which God's Wisdom Is Made Known

When does a mystery cease to be a mystery?
 How did God make known his wisdom?
 Does this mean that there are no passages in the Bible which are difficult to understand? Give reasons for your answer.
 What is meant by saying that the Spirit searches the deep things of God?
 How did Paul illustrate his remarks about the Spirit's revelation?
 What was God's purpose in giving his Spirit to the apostles?
 Discuss the difference between revelation and inspiration.

Lesson III—July 21, 1963

WORK OF PREACHERS

Lesson Text

1 Cor. 3: 1-15

1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ.

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 where-as 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-po'l'-los; are ye not men?

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

6 I planted, A-po'l'-los 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.

8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: but each shall receive his own reward according to his own labor.

9 For we are God's fellow-workers: ye are God's husbandry, God's building.

10 According to the grace of God which was given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder I laid a foundation; and another buildeth thereon. But let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon.

11 For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Je'-sus Christ.

12 But if any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble;

13 Each man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is.

14 If any man's work shall abide which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward.

15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire.

Daily Bible Readings

July 15. M.....	Gospel for All (Matt. 28: 18-20; Mark 16: 15, 16)
July 16. T.....	Gospel Will Save (1 Cor. 15: 1-3)
July 17. W	Gospel Must Not Be Corrupted (Gal. 1: 6-10)
July 18. T.....	The Gospel of the Kingdom (Mark 1: 14, 15)
July 19. F	"Live of the Gospel" (1 Cor. 9: 1-14)
July 20. S.....	Laboring in the Gospel (Phil. 4: 1-7)
July 21. S.....	Paul Preached the Gospel (2 Cor. 11: 1-10)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—First Corinthians was written from Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

Preachers are messengers; and if they are faithful gospel preachers, they are engaged in one of the noblest works possible for men. Gospel preaching was ordained of God, and it is not therefore something which may be treated lightly, either by the preacher himself or by those who hear him. The New Testament is our only source-book on this subject, and when we turn to its pages we soon learn that the terms "preach" and "preacher" are used in two senses, namely, (1) to describe "inspired preaching," such as was done by the apostles when they, for the first time, made known the glad tidings of salvation (1 Cor. 1: 21; 2:

9, 10; Rom. 10: 14, 15; cf. Tit. 1: 3; Gal. 1: 11, 12); and (2) to indicate a proclaimer of that which the inspired apostles had already made known (2 Tim. 4: 1-5; 2: 2).

The ministry of preaching has been a custom among the followers of Christ since the beginning of his kingdom, nearly two thousand years ago. This kind of work was responsible, perhaps more than any other, for the rapid growth and development of the early church; and yet every faithful preacher of the gospel knows that his ministry cannot be effective—cannot have the full release of its power, and thereby fulfill its mission in the most effective

manner—unless the people understand something of the way in which he is able to serve them. (Cf. a physician, lawyer, etc.) The preacher's work will necessarily be limited, unless the people know something about how he is fitted to serve them.

Every person who has any conception of what it means to be loyal to Christ readily understands that all preaching which meets with Divine approval must be in harmony with the principles of the New Testament; but there is one thing which is not generally understood, or else is ignored, namely, that the preacher, as indicated above, is not the only one who has responsibility in the matter of preaching. Each individual member of the church, especially, has a duty in this respect which is not fulfilled by a contribution which helps to make it possible for the preacher to do his work. All preaching today, of course, is uninspired (Jude 3; Gal. 1: 6-9); and since it is a solemn obligation, every proclaimer of the gospel should have some definite objectives in mind when he sets before others the message which he has gleaned from God's word. Foremost among the aims of effective preaching are (1) to enlighten the mind; (2) to disturb the conscience; (3) to energize the will; and (4) to stir the heart.

The Golden Text

This portion of our lesson is in the principal text, and it will be considered in its proper place.

The Text Explained

Proof of the Corinthians' Lack of Spirituality
(1 Cor. 3: 1-4)

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ.

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

one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not men?

Paul's reference to the spiritual condition of the Corinthian Christians (verse 1) should be considered in the light of verse 14 of the previous chapter. "Now the natural man [that is, the unspiritual man, see marginal note] receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged." The "unspiritual" person does not have the capacity for rendering a verdict regarding spiritual matters. And so, in keeping with Paul's figure, the gospel, as it were, was on trial before the unspiritual; and, as The Expositor's Greek Testament notes, "like the Athenian philosophers, they give it first a hearing, but they have no organon [that is, a method for procedure or investigation] to test it by. The inquiry is stultified, *ab initio* [from the beginning], by the incompetence of the jury. The unspiritual are out of court as religious critics; they are deaf men judging music." And then, as verse 15 shows, the *spiritual* man is the exact opposite: "But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, and he himself is judged of no man." (See James 3: 15; Jude 19 for other occurrences of the original word for "natural," or *unspiritual*.)

While the terms *psuchikos* (natural or unspiritual) and *sarkikos* (carnal) are not exact synonyms, they are, nevertheless, used synonymously, as Trench, in his *Synonyms of the New Testament*, points out. And so Paul told the brethren in Corinth that he could not speak unto them as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto "mere baby Christians," as Williams renders it. In commenting on this, Archdeacon Farrar says, "Though softened by the word *brethren*, there was a crushing irony of reproof in these words: 'You thought yourselves quite above the need of my simple teaching. You were looking down on me from the whole height of your inferiority. The elementary character of my doctrine was after all the necessary consequence of your own incapacity for anything more profound.'"

The figure of feeding the Corinthian Christians with milk, rather than with meat, is similar to that which the apostle later used with

reference to the Hebrew brethren. In speaking of the priesthood of Christ, after the order of Melchizedek, Paul says, "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard of interpretation, seeing ye are become dull of hearing. For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. For every one that partaketh of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But solid food is for fullgrown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil." (Heb. 5: 11-14; cf. John 16: 12; Mark 4: 33.)

As long as professed Christians manifest the attitude which characterized the Corinthian brethren, they not only cannot understand the spiritual teaching of the New Testament; they are not even in the position of learning as they should. There are many disciples who imagine that they know far more than their godly teachers; and they even go as far as to disparage these faithful men and women who are trying to present the truth to them, and make it plain that they think that they know more than those who are trying to teach them. That, of course might be possible; but if they are manifesting "freshly traits" (cf. Gal. 5: 19-21), the chances are that they are still "baby Christians." Robertson notes that "Paul did not glory in making his sermons thin and watery. Simplicity does not require lack of ideas or dullness. It is pathetic to think how the preacher has to clip the wings of thought and imagination because the hearers cannot go with him. But nothing hinders great preaching like dullness caused by sin on the part of auditors who are impatient with the high demand of the gospel."

The Proper Estimate of God's Ministers

(1 Cor. 3: 5-9)

What then is Apollos? and what is Paul? Ministers through whom ye believed; and each as the Lord gave to him. I planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything,

neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: but each shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow-workers: ye are God's husbandry, God's building.

Earlier in his letter to the Corinthians, Paul had pointed out to the brethren their divided condition, resulting from their factious attitude toward preachers; and now (taking himself and Apollos as examples), he endeavors to show them the baselessness of such a stand. Preachers are not intended to be leaders of parties; they are merely instruments in the hand of God to make it possible for people to become obedient believers in Christ. It is interesting to observe that the original term for "ministers" (*diakonoi*) is the same which is elsewhere rendered deacons. (Cf. 1 Tim. 3: 8, 12.) Paul apparently referred to himself and Apollos as "deacons" because of the specific service which they rendered; but when he mentioned his personal relation to Christ, he usually called himself a bondservant.

In saying that he planted, while Apollos watered, Paul was referring to their individual or specific work. Paul was a preacher who preferred to labor where Christ had not been named, and in doing so he was the planter or founder of churches; whereas, Apollos taught the brethren and built them up in the faith. (Cf. Rom. 15: 20; Acts 18: 27.) There was therefore no conflict between their labors, and neither was there any reason why one should be preferred above the other. Farrar notes that the reference of the word "watered" to baptism by Augustine in one of the numberless instances of Scripture distorted by ecclesiasticism. Thus, instead of being leaders of parties in the church at Corinth, Paul and Apollos were merely servants of the Lord who made it possible for them to be Christians; and since they only had that which the Lord had given to them, there was no basis on their part for pride or conceit, and therefore no occasion for faction and strife. This idea is enlarged upon throughout chapters 3 and 4, and again in chapter 12.

The lesson which is set forth in this section of our text is one of the

most important subjects which can engage our attention, namely, that of personality in the service of God. He has made it plain throughout the entire Bible that he requires the work of men in the great scheme of human redemption. He never does for those who will not do anything for themselves or for him. When Jesus authorized the evangelization of the world, his plan was not one to be accomplished by a sudden miracle, but by the faithful labors of human beings. (Cf. Mark 16: 15; 2 Tim. 2: 2.) This great effort requires "team-work," as well as mutual trust in God for the necessary strength for the accomplishment of the task. "Paul and Apollos" are both needed, the planter of churches, as well as the one to give them the needed instruction for growth and development; and this means that we should all have a charitable attitude toward varying conditions under which the workers must labor. (Cf. Num. 11: 26-29; John 4: 35-38.)

It is interesting to observe that most of Paul's metaphors are drawn from the works and customs of men, rather than from the works of nature. Vincent quotes Farrar as saying that in his epistles we only breathe the air of cities and synagogues. Vincent then goes on to say that "the abundance of the architectural metaphors is not strange in view of the magnificent temples and public buildings which he was continually seeing at Antioch, Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus. His frequent use of *to build* and *building* is noteworthy. In this sense the two words *oikodomeō* and *oikodomē* occur twenty-six times in the New Testament, and in all but two cases in Paul's writings." (Cf. Acts 9: 31; 1 Pet. 2: 5.)

But in the passage now before us, Paul draws his metaphors both from the work of man and nature. "Ye are God's husbandry," that is, farm or tilled land, and "God's building." This indicates the sphere of activity, and the apostle points out that he and Apollos were God's fellow-workers in those areas. All Christians should be workers in the service of God, and they would in that sense, of course, be God's fellow-workers; but that is not what Paul is discussing here. The contrast is between Paul and Apollos as teachers,

on the one hand, and the church at Corinth as the taught, on the other. They all, both the teachers and the taught belonged to God; and there was therefore no ground for dissension among them. It should be continuously kept in mind that Paul's purpose in the first four chapters of First Corinthians was to deal with the question of division in the church at Corinth; and that means that all of his arguments in this section of the letter must be understood in that light.

The Responsibility of Human Builders

(1 Cor. 3: 10-15)

According to the grace of God which was given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder I laid a foundation; and another buildeth thereon. But let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon. For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid which is Jesus Christ.

The grace of God which was given to Paul was the special endowment for his apostolic work (cf. Eph. 3: 1-9), and which fitted him as a wise masterbuilder. The original term for "masterbuilder" is *architektōn*, from which we have our word "architect"; and it occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The term "wise" is used in the sense of skillful or experienced. Thus, as a skillful or experienced architect, Paul had laid the foundation for the church in Corinth when he preached the gospel of Christ there. This foundation, he explains, is Jesus Christ. The meaning here is substantially the same as that found in Matt. 16: 18, when Jesus told Peter that he would build his church upon the "rock of truth" which he had just confessed; but it should be observed that in the two passages two different figures are used. In Matthew, Jesus is represented as the builder, and the truth regarding his divinity is the foundation; while in First Corinthians, Paul is the builder and Jesus is the foundation.

The Corinthian brethren could not deny that Paul had laid the foundation for their faith, and he says in the next chapter, "For though ye have ten thousand tutors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I begat you through the gospel." (1 Cor. 4: 15.) With these

facts before them, Paul is drawing the line clearly between himself as the founder of the church in Corinth, and the teachers who were responsible for the divided condition which he has already described. That which has already been said regarding Apollos is sufficient to absolve him from any responsibility in that connection. And it is well to note here that the work of laying the foundation not only applied to Corinth; for the work of the apostolic founders is done, once and for all time to come. So long as the church continues, men will be building upon the foundation which the apostles laid, that is, upon that which is contained in the New Testament. (Cf. Gal. 1: 6-9.) They may try to altar the foundation, but they will be judged by that which is written. "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus."

Since the work of laying the foundation is done and cannot be changed, the important thing to consider is that which is done in building upon it; for it is in this respect that the unity of God's people, or their divided condition, will be seen. If teachers are careful to teach only that which is written, then God's people will speak the same thing, and there will be no divisions among them; but they will be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment. (See 1 Cor. 1: 10.) But when men begin to speculate and depart from the original doctrine, division and all kinds of trouble will be the inevitable result. There is no wonder therefore that Paul said, "But let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon." No more forceful example of this responsibility can be found than the one contained in Matt. 7: 21-23, where Jesus said that he would banish from him in the day of judgment all who taught or practiced anything which he himself had not authorized. The term "iniquity" which is used in that passage means to act without authority.

But if any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble; each man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire: and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work shall

abide which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire.

The metaphor contained in this portion of our lesson text must be taken in a large and free sense, and not pressed into detail, if it is to be understood. The reference is not primarily to the religious character of believers in general; but rather to the duty and rewards of teachers. The foundation on which the superstructure is erected has already been explained to be Christ, and that which the individual builders contribute to the structure is their *teaching*, rather than their disciples. The reference, again, is not to false teaching as such by deliberate opposers of the truth, but to the erroneous interpretations of scripture, and the crude or fanatical preaching of sincere but ignorant men; for it is only in this sense that the teachers could be saved, while their work is burned up.

After all the teaching regarding Christ and his plan to save the race has been done, and the testing time has come (probably the day of judgment), then the value of every man's

contribution to the building, that is, his teaching, will be manifested; and that which is worthless will be destroyed. This clearly shows that a distinction is made between the teacher, on the one hand, and his work, on the other. The sincere but mistaken teacher's efforts will be shown to be worthless in themselves, but the teacher himself will be saved and will receive the reward of personal character, but not that of a good builder. Paul's whole point is that which concerns the actual dealing with the body of truth, and not to deliberate perversions of it. (Cf. Phil. 1: 15-18; Matt. 7: 21-23; Gal. 1: 6-9.) Sincerity alone will not suffice for salvation (cf. Acts 23: 1; 24: 16); but when sincere teachers are honestly mistaken they will lose their work, but not their souls. "It is an inexpressible source of comfort to us, amid the weakness and ignorance of our lives, to know that if we have only erred through human frailty and feebleness, while yet we desired to be sincere and faithful, the work will be burnt, yet the workman will be saved." (Farrar; cf. Alford, Vincent, *in loco.*) This should be an impressive lesson to all who attempt to teach God's word. (Cf. James 3: 1; 2 Tim. 2: 15.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What authority do we have for preachers of the gospel?
In what senses is the term used in the New Testament?
How is it that people are saved by preaching?
What should the average member of the church know about preaching?
What responsibility do the hearers have with reference to preaching?
What are some of the basic aims which should influence preaching?

Proof of the Corinthians' Lack of Spirituality

Under what circumstances did Paul refer to the spiritual status of the Corinthians?
Who is an "unspiritual" person?
Why isn't he fitted to fudge regarding the words of the Spirit?
What did Paul mean by saying that the Corinthians were "carnal"?
What effect must his language have had upon them?
Why did Paul feed them with milk rather than with meat?
What application does this have for our day?

How can one know that this lack of maturity exists among brethren now?

The Proper Estimate of God's Ministers

What example did Paul place before the Corinthian brethren, and why?
In what sense did he use the term "ministers"?
What did Paul mean by saying that he "planted" and Apollos "watered"?
What lesson did he mean to teach by this two-fold work?
What does the Bible teach regarding God's use of human personality in his service?
What important lesson should we learn from this?
What metaphor did Paul use to illustrate his teaching?
What significance is attached to the statement that both belong to God?

The Responsibility of Human Builders

What "grace of God" was given to Paul?
What did he mean by saying that he was a wise masterbuilder?
In what way did he lay the foundation? and what foundation?
What point was Paul stressing in this statement?
What peculiar relationship did he have toward the Corinthian church?

Why can no other foundation be laid?
 What warning did he give to the builders?
 What particular kind of building does he mention?
 What is the basic meaning of "building"?

In what way will the work of each builder be tried?
 How is it that the work of a builder may be destroyed, and he be saved?
 What important lesson should we learn from this?

Lesson IV—July 28, 1963

DISCIPLINE COMMANDED

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: 13.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Cor. 4: 1-21.

Daily Bible Readings

July 22. M.....	.....Dealing with the Fallen (Gal. 6: 1-5)
July 23. T.....	.....Withdrawing from the Disorderly (2 Thess. 3: 6-15)
July 24. W.....	.....Discipline in the Church (1 Cor. 5: 1-13)
July 25. T.....	.....Chastening Good (Heb. 12: 4-13)
July 26. F.....	.....Take Heed Lest Ye Fall (1 Cor. 10: 1-13)
July 27. S.....	.....Warnings Essential (Heb. 3: 12-19)
July 28. S.....	.....Some Withdrawals Wrong (Gal. 1-12)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—First Corinthians was written from Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

The term "discipline," like the word "temperance," is a broad term, but it is usually employed in a much narrower sense. Temperance is not

limited to the question of strong drink, as so many seem to think, but has to do with the broad principle of self-control with reference to all

relations of life. And in a similar manner, discipline is not only related to the question of correction or punishment for wrongdoing, but is concerned with the whole question of training, growth, and development of the individual, as the effort is made to reach the end in view. One of the clearest examples of the meaning and purpose of discipline, along with the means of accomplishing it, is found in 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17: "Every scripture inspired of God is also 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."

God has a purpose for his people (Rom. 8: 28), and it requires "discipline" in order to help human beings reach that goal. There must be teaching, so that they will know what they must do; reproof, for any wrongs which they have done; correction, that is, get them back into the right way; and instruction so that continuous progress may be made—"instruction which aims at the increase of virtue" (Thayer). The whole aim of divine discipline is to aid one in becoming that which God wants him to be. Hugh Blair says, "The discipline which corrects the baseness of worldly passions, fortifies the heart with virtuous principles, enlightens the mind with useful knowledge, and furnishes it with enjoyment from within itself, is of more consequence to real felicity, than all the provisions we can make of the goods of fortune."

The writer of Hebrews sets forth the purpose and importance of *corrective* discipline in these words:

"My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord,

Nor faint when thou art reprov'd of him;

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,

And scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

It is for chastening that ye endure; God dealth with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father chaseneth not? But if ye are without chastening, whereof all have been made partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection

to the Father of spirits, and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed good to them; but he for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness. All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness. Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the palsied knees; and make straight paths for your feet, that that which is lame be not turned out of the way, but rather be healed." (Heb. 12: 5b-13.)

Hastings points out that few words of Scripture have been laid as a healing balm on wounded hearts of tender than the ones which have just been quoted. They may long go unnoticed on the page, like a lighthouse in calm sunshine; but sooner or later the stormy night will come, and then the bright beam will flash out and be welcomed by those who are in need of guidance. These words of the inspired penman go very deep into the meaning of life; and they tell us how much better God's discipline is than that of the wisest and most devoted parents. They also give the greatest of reasons as to why we should yield more complete and cheerful obedience to God, than we did to our parents who did so much for us. There is therefore a specific design in all the discipline of life. Whatever suffering we are called upon to endure is not without a purpose; the design is both high and large. The purpose of domestic discipline is primarily for a temporal end; but God's design in his is to educate, train, and develop his children into spiritual and immortal perfection—that they may become "partakers of his holiness."

David understood the discipline of Jehovah, and he could therefore sing,

"Though I walk in the midst of trouble thou wilt revive me;

Thou wilt stretch forth thy hand against the wrath of mine enemies,

And thy right hand will save me.

Jehovah will perfect that which concerneth me:

Thy lovingkindness, O Jehovah, endureth for ever;

Forsake not the works of thine own hands." (Psalm 138: 7, 8.)

The informed child of God will be

willing for the Lord to bring to perfection his purpose in his life; and genuine faith cannot associate God with work which is only partially done. He will not forsake the task until it is completed, if we will only submit ourselves to his will. But it will have to be admitted as it respects many of us, that our ideas of his precise purpose, and our concep-

tion of what his methods should be, are often extremely imperfect. (Cf. Isa. 55: 8, 9.) This should be enough to convince us that we should never rebel against the discipline which we can know that God has authorized, if we will only read and study his revealed will. Let us, then, keep these facts in mind as we study the lesson now before us.

The Golden Text

This portion of our study is found in the lesson text, and it will be covered in its proper place.

The Text Explained

Lack of Discipline Regarding a Moral Scandal

The Case Stated

(1 Cor. 5: 1-5)

It is actually reported that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not even among the Gentiles, that one of you hath his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and did not rather mourn, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

This is the second major sin which Paul deals with in the epistle which we are now studying; the first was that of divisions among the brethren. Although only one man was guilty of the sin of fornication, it is a noticeable fact that Paul holds the entire church responsible. There is a striking similarity between this case and that of Israel, as set forth in Joshua, chapters 6 and 7. (Cf. Rom. 15: 4.) Thus, instead of members of the church condemning an offender among them, it would be much better if they would try to determine wherein they themselves might have a responsibility in the matter.

Bible students are not agreed as to whether the man in question had actually married his father's wife, who was evidently his stepmother, or simply had her as his concubine. Vincent offers some critical remarks regarding both views, and then says, "The indications seem to be in favor of marriage. Notwithstanding the facilities for divorce afforded by the Roman law, and the loose morals of the Corinthians, for a man to marry his stepmother was regarded as a scandal." Nothing is said about the father, whether he was dead or divorced. These questions, along with

those regarding the specific relation which the man in question sustained to the woman, are passed over as being immaterial in comparison with the one fact that the woman he was living with was "his father's wife." The sin is branded as being without parallel in blackness, which evidently means that Gentile society, as such, did not and would not tolerate such a relationship among them. Barnes says that the offence was known in a few instances among the Gentiles, but it was soundly condemned by classic writers. It was nowhere approved by heathen society, and that made it all the worse for the church to tolerate such a relationship. Cicero, in speaking of the offence, said that "it was an incredible and unheard of crime." No charge was placed against the woman, which indicates that she was not a member of the church.

And so, instead of being humbled by the fact that a revolting sin was known to exist among them, the Corinthian Christians were haughty and proud, and were so occupied with their "theological discussions" that they fail to attach any significance to the criminal conduct which was being continued in their very midst. Such an attitude was disastrous to their influence for good, and resulted in the church's becoming a laughing-stock in the community. This was in sharp contrast with the disciplinary action taken in the early church in Jerusalem against the sinful conduct of Ananias and Sapphira, which at first was not even known to the church itself, to say nothing of the public. (See Acts 5: 1ff.) When the "onlookers" saw that the Lord's people intended to keep the church pure,

"believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (Acts 5: 14.)

The "mourning" which should have characterized the church in Corinth was the kind of mourning which is often seen at funerals—the mourning over a brother whose sin has resulted in his death to righteousness. If members of the church would manifest this attitude toward those among them who have sinned, and would always see to it that any discipline which is administered is preceded by mourning; they would not only keep themselves free from wrongdoing, but would also save many an offender from the evil one. (Cf. Ezra 10: 6; James 4: 9, 10.) If we are going to be benefited by this lesson, we must remember that it does not merely concern the people in Corinth during the early days of the church; but that the principles are also applicable to us today, as may be seen from 1 Cor. 1: 2. While it is hardly probable that any one today would marry his father's wife, it is a recognized fact that in many congregations of the Lord's people that there are both men and women who are married to some other people's wives or husbands. This situation demands more than mere criticism or ignoring; it should be dealt with in the light of God's word.

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, in the name of our Lord Jesus, ye being gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, 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 Jesus.

The passage just quoted shows what the church itself is supposed to do about such sinful matters. This action is authorized by both the spirit of apostolic teaching and the presence of Christ (cf. Matt. 18: 20); and it should be observed that when such action is taken, the church is to be assembled. Some Bible students profess to see in this example the exercise of miraculous power in dealing with offenders, as well as bodily harm afflicted by Satan; but, as McGarvey and Pendleton say, "The argument is very flimsy, and is not sustained by the facts recorded in

the case. The meaning is that Paul, having commanded the condemnation of the culprit, will be spiritually present to aid the church in that condemnation. The offender, being excluded from the kingdom of God, is to be thrust back into the kingdom of Satan, that the sense of his loneliness, shame and lost condition may cause him to repent, and mortify or subdue his flesh, i.e., his lust, after which his spirit, being delivered, might be saved." Lipscomb notes that "the exclusion from the fellowship of the saints and the privileges of the house of God is a serious and awful matter. When one has been excluded from the fellowship of the church, Christians should make him feel that he forfeits the esteem and association of all the members of the church, yet he should be warned and admonished as a brother." (See 2 Thess. 3: 6, 14, 15.) To allow a flagrant sinner to remain in the fellowship of the church is nothing short of encouraging him in his sin.

The False Attitude of the Corinthians (1 Cor. 5: 6-8)

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

This section of our text appears to be a continuation of the thought introduced in verse 2. Glorifying, in and of itself, was not necessarily wrong; but theirs was not good, because of the *subject* of their glorying. In their zeal for worldly wisdom and other matters which appealed to their fleshly pride, they had failed to recognize the fact that a single sin indulged in, or allowed to continue in the church, would act like leaven and soon affect all of the members. This was the reason why the wicked man could not be allowed to remain among them.

In urging the Corinthian brethren to purge out the old leaven, the obvious reference was to the preparation for the Jewish passover (Ex. 12: 15, 19; 13: 7). Leaven, as used in

this passage and in this sense elsewhere in the Bible, refers to that which corrupts. Alford renders the question in verse 6 in these words: "Are you not aware that a little leaven imparts a character to the whole lump?" The term "lump" is a significant term, in that it suggests the oneness of the church, and the consequent danger from evil-doers (Vincent).

First Corinthians apparently was written in the spring of the year, probably soon after the time of the Jewish passover (1 Cor. 16: 8), and that may account for Paul's reference to the Christians' passover. Not only is Christ our passover; he is our *perpetual* passover; and that means that the feast is a continuous one. And just as literal leaven was not permitted to be used by the Jews in their passover, just so must Christians see to it that that which leaven typifies be removed from them, in the instance now before us, the incestuous man. However, Paul does not stop there: he tells all Christians to leave out malice and wickedness, and be characterized instead by sincerity and truth. Bengel notes that "*sincerity* takes care not to admit evil with good; *truth*, not to admit evil instead of good."

Some Previous Instruction Regarding Discipline Clarified (1 Cor. 5: 9-13)

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

It is clear from the passage just quoted that our *First Corinthians* was not the first letter which Paul had sent to the church in Corinth. There is, of course, no way of knowing, at least by us, just how many letters Paul and the other inspired penmen wrote, which have not come down to us. (Cf. Eph. 3: 3; Col. 4: 16) The letter referred to in the passage now before us is usually spoken of today as Paul's "lost epistle" to the Co-

inthians; but there are some facts which are available to us which make it possible to think that maybe at least a part of that so-called lost letter is in our New Testament.

We know, for example, that at least a part of that letter, that is, Paul's previous letter to the Corinthians, had to do with the question of whether or not Christians might associate with sinful people in the world. The Corinthian brethren misunderstood Paul's meaning, and interpreted his message as forbidding Christians to have any association with unconverted sinners; but in verse 11 of the passage now under consideration, Paul carefully explained to them just what he did mean. Turning now to 2 Cor. 6: 14-7: 1, we are faced with the remarkable fact that here is a passage on exactly the same subject referred to in 1 Cor. 5: 9-11, and capable of precisely the same misinterpretation, that is, have no association with any sinners in the world. (Read 2 Cor. 6: 14-7: 1.)

Furthermore, it is quite noticeable that the thought which is broken off in 2 Cor. 6: 13 is picked up and continued in 2 Cor. 7: 2. This can be plainly seen when the two verses just mentioned are read together, with no break between them. Beginning with the first of the paragraph: "Our mouth is open unto you, O Corinthians, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own affections. Now for a recompense in like kind (I speak as unto my children), be ye also enlarged. Open your hearts to us: we wronged no man, we corrupted no man, we took advantage of no man. I say it not to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die together and live together. 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 afflictions." (2 Cor. 6: 11-7: 4.)

It is altogether possible therefore that 2 Cor. 6: 14-7: 1 is at least a fragment of Paul's so-called "lost letter" to the Corinthians, which is referred to in 1 Cor. 5: 9-11; but if this is true how did it come to be preserved in Second Corinthians? That is an interesting question, and it will be considered later. But, for

the time being, it is only necessary to say that 2 Cor. 6: 14-7: 1 is on an entirely different subject from that which is discussed in 2 Cor. 6: 11-7: 4.

For what have I to do with judging them that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Put away the wicked man from among yourselves. This is further evidence that Paul, in his previous letter, did not have reference to sin-

ful people outside the church. Alford thinks that these remarks about judging form a transition-point to the subject which is discussed in the beginning of the next chapter. But having finished his explanation regarding the prohibition of his former epistle, and with it the question of the fornicator among them, he gives them, before passing on to chapter 6, a summary command regarding the latter; and the same, of course, is true of any other wrongdoers who bring reproach upon the church.

Questions for Discussion

What is the meaning that many people attach to the term "discipline"?
 What is its Bible meaning?
 Show how the process works in everyday living.
 What is the over-all aim of discipline?
 Why should thoughtful people welcome God's discipline?

Lack of Discipline Regarding a Moral Scandal

The Case Stated

How did Paul come to discuss the question of discipline at this time?
 How did the subject fit into his purpose in writing to the Corinthians?
 What was the relation of the church, as such, to this particular case?
 What should always be the attitude of the congregation toward questions of wrong-doing on the part of individual members?
 What appears to have been the sin in the question now before us, that is, what was the relationship between the man and the woman?
 Why wasn't it necessary for Paul to give all of the details regarding it?
 How was such a sin generally regarded by the people of that day?
 What attitude on the part of the church did Paul condemn?
 How could they feel as they did with such a sin among them?
 Why is discipline so essential for the welfare of the church?
 In what way does "mourning" over such matters fit into the picture?
 Discuss the matter as it applies to the church today?
 How did Paul show the church its duty regarding the question?

Why was it necessary for the church to be assembled when action was taken?
 What is the real purpose of such disciplinary action?
 What should be the attitude of members of the church toward those from whom fellowship has been withdrawn?
 What is the real effect of a failure to withdraw fellowship from flagrant offenders?
 Who is to make the decision regarding the withdrawal of fellowship from sinners?

The False Attitude of the Corinthians

To what glorying of the Corinthians did Paul have reference?
 What was their real trouble?
 What did Paul mean by telling the Corinthians to purge out the old leaven?
 What was the danger in allowing the old leaven to remain?
 What was Paul's probable reason for referring to the question of leaven?
 What leaven should Christians today refuse and keep?

Some Previous Instruction Regarding Discipline Clarified

What do we learn here regarding Paul's correspondence with the Corinthians?
 In the light of the facts regarding this question, what possibility exists concerning this so-called "lost letter"?
 What further evidence did Paul give that he was not telling the Corinthians not to associate with sinners outside the church?
 What command did he give regarding the man who had his father's wife?
 What lesson should we learn from this?

Lesson V—August 4, 1963

LAWSUITS BETWEEN BRETHERN FORBIDDEN

Lesson Text

1 Cor. 6: 1-11

1 Dare any of you, having a matter against his neighbor, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints?

2 Or know ye not that the saints shall judge the world? and if the

world is judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more, things that pertain to this life?

4 If then ye have to judge things pertaining to this life, do ye set them to judge who are of no account in the church?

5 I say *this* to move you to shame. What, cannot there be *found* among you one wise man who shall be able to decide between his brethren,

6 But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before unbelievers?

7 Nay, already it is altogether a defect in you, that ye have lawsuits one with another. Why not rather take wrong? why not rather be defrauded?

8 Nay, but ye yourselves do wrong,

and defraud, and that *your* brethren.

9 Or know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men,

10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

11 And such were some of you: but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Je-sus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.

Golden Text.—“*Why not rather take wrong? why not rather be defrauded?*” (1 Cor. 6: 7.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Cor. 6: 12-20.

Daily Bible Readings

July 29. M.....	..... God Calls to Peace (1 Cor. 7: 1-15)
July 30. T.....	..... God the Author of Peace (1 Cor. 14: 26-33)
July 31. W.....	..... Things Which Make for Peace (Rom. 13: 1-19)
August 1. T.....	..... Follow Peace with All Men (Heb. 12: 1-14)
August 2. F.....	..... An Example of Peaceful Attitude (Gen. 13: 5-13)
August 3. S.....	..... Wisdom from Above Peaceable (James 3: 13-18)
August 4. S.....	..... Suffer for Well Doing (1 Pet. 3: 13-17)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—First Corinthians was written from Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

Litigation between brethren was the third disorder in the Corinthian church which claimed Paul's attention in the letter we are now studying; and the fourth, that of the abuse of Christian liberty, is discussed in the devotional reading for today's lesson. There can be no question regarding the teaching of the New Testament concerning lawsuits between brethren, but it will have to be admitted that that teaching is not always heeded. There must therefore be some reason why any professed Christian will jeopardize his hope of heaven by engaging in such litigation, which does not appear on the surface. James declares, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all." (James 2: 10.) To "stumble" simply means to set aside or go contrary to that which the law teaches, as is clearly shown in the next verse: "For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou dost not com-

mit adultery, but killest, thou art become a transgressor of the law." (James 2: 11.)

The truth which James expresses should be enough to show any thoughtful person the great danger of violating anything which the Lord requires of his people; and it is also sufficient to lead us to ask, Why will brethren, in the face of the explicit teaching of Paul on the subject now before us, still go to law with each other? Perhaps there are not many who do that, but even one case is too many. There are, of course, many things which might be said regarding this question, but it appears that the overall reason for the violation of the injunction now before us, is the failure to realize fully the significance of the unity of God's people. This is one of the basic ideas which runs throughout the entire epistle, and indeed throughout the whole New Testament.

If professed followers of Christ can be brought to see the full sig-

nificance of what it means to be members of the family of God, it will not be difficult for them to see how foreign to that relationship litigation between brethren is. A well-ordered family, even among men, never resorts to lawsuits in order to settle their differences. Wise parents implant within their children the principles of truth and righteousness; and then if problems arise, they have something to fall back upon in their efforts to seek a settlement. But when children are brought up as they should be, they are going to love each other and try to treat each other fairly; and this, in turn, will cause them to apply the spirit of the golden rule to the solution of any difficulty which they may encounter in their relationship with each other. And if this is true with human households, what must it be with the family of God!

Jesus, of course, knew about the weakness of the flesh when he gave his law regarding differences among

brethren; and those who are familiar with that which he said are aware of the fact that he showed both the offender and the offended their responsibility with reference to such matters. When the Lord's way is followed, there is no reason to go before the courts of the land in order to seek relief from any wrongdoing. "And he said unto his disciples, It is impossible but that occasions of stumbling should come; but woe unto him, through whom they come! It were well for him if a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, rather than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble. Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he sin against thee seven times in the day, and seven times turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him." (Luke 17: 1-4.) The mutual responsibility of the offender and the offended is set forth in Matt. 5: 23, 26; 18: 15-17, and will be considered further on in this study.

The Golden Text

This portion of our study is found in the lesson text, and it will be considered in its proper place.

The Text Explained

An Unbecoming Practice Condemned

(1 Cor. 6: 1-6)

Dare any of you, having a matter against his neighbor, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? The Expositor's Greek Testament notes that the abrupt interrogation, with which this section of our lesson begins, marks the outburst of indignant feeling; and it is as if Paul said to the Corinthian brethren, You treat the church, in which the Holy Spirit dwells (1 Cor. 3: 16), as though it were without authority or wisdom; and take your case from the highest court to the lowest! This was nothing short of reckless audacity on their part. The term "dare" literally means to have the courage or be brave enough; and in commenting on it, Bengel says, "The injured majesty of the church is denoted by a splendid word." That which the Corinthian Christians were doing was a violation of the fundamental principles of Christianity, and Paul was asking them, Do you have the audacity to be so presumptuous

in your attitude toward the family of God?

The original words from which "his neighbor" are translated are *ton heteron*, and they literally mean "the other." (See marginal note; cf. Rom. 13: 8.) Verses 5, 6, of the text now under consideration, make it plain that the reference is to brethren in Christ; and while Paul speaks in general terms, it is altogether possible that he may have had some specific cases in mind, as he did in the instance of the fornicator of chapter 5. The first four irregularities in the Corinthian church with which Paul dealt in his letter to the brethren there—division, incest, litigation, and abuse of Christian liberty—came to him by report or rumor (1 Cor. 1: 11; cf. 7: 1); and that may have been his reason for not being more specific in dealing with them.

The "unrighteous" in the passage now before us has reference to the courts of human governments; and the term is used in contrast with the saints, that is, God's people. **Un-**

righteous tribunals does not imply that justice could not be obtained there; the idea is that such was not the proper place for Christians to go for the settlement of their disputes. Paul himself appealed to the Roman courts when he was about to be mistreated by those who were not Christians; and he was often in this way spared the ordeal of suffering unjust punishment. (Cf. Acts 22: 25-29; 25: 9-12; Rom. 13: 3, 4.) But when it comes to differences among brethren, the Lord has made ample provisions for their solution.

Or know ye not that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world is judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more, things that pertain to this life?

The expression "know ye not" is used in First Corinthians ten times, with six of the instances in the chapter from which our lesson is taken—three in the lesson text. In view of the Corinthian brethren's claim to a high degree of intellectuality, it is quite possible that Paul employed the words with a touch of irony; as if to say, You who profess to be so clever, can it be that you are ignorant of the basic truths of Christianity? The use of the expression "know ye not" in verses 2, 3 probably was meant to call the Corinthians' attention to the fact of their exalted station in Christ, and to remind them that Christians are fully qualified to resolve any controversies which might arise among them.

The matter of judging the world and angels is something which Paul clearly says that Christians will do; but neither he nor any other inspired writer gives a clear explanation as to how that will be accomplished. We can accept the affirmation as a matter of faith; and in the absence of any definite information regarding the time and manner of its accomplishment, there is neither reason nor need for our speculating concerning it. Many writers have expressed their views regarding these questions, but those who read what they have said are not any more certain about the meaning, than they were before their study began. The principal lesson which concerns us is that Paul is saying that since

Christians are qualified for the judgment of the world and angels, then they are certainly capable of deciding the relatively minor disputes which arise among brethren in this life.

If then ye have to judge things pertaining to this life, do ye set them to judge who are of no account in the church? I say this to move you to shame. What, cannot there be found among you one wise man who shall be able to decide between his brethren, but brother goeth to law with brother, and that before unbelievers?

Textual critics are not agreed as to whether the term "set" in verse 4 should be regarded as imperative or interrogative—as a command or a question. Many think that it might be either; and since it is in the form of a question in our text, we shall accept that viewpoint as being correct. Meyer thinks that the interrogative corresponds best with the whole structure of this animated address. Again, Bible students are not agreed regarding the identity of those "who are of no account in the church," that is, who are of least esteem. Weymouth renders the passage in these words: "If therefore you have matters of this life to be decided, is it men who have no standing at all in the church whom you make your judges?"

Lipscomb notes that some think that the question was asked to reproach them for setting heathen tribunals over them, and Beet, in commenting on the passage says, "Paul asks with bitter irony, 'Is it because your matters of dispute are so small, as belonging merely to the present life, compared with the tremendous sentence yourselves will share in pronouncing,—is it for this reason that you submit them to men on whom you look down with contempt as aliens from the kingdom of God and exposed to the condemnation of the great day, to men worthy to decide only these trifling temporal matters?'"

The Cambridge Bible sums up the matter in this way: "I speak to your shame. You are not to suppose me to be in earnest. I only say this to shame you for the undue value you set on the things of this life. Such matters might fitly be left to the decision of the most insignificant

member of your community. But there is no necessity for that. Surely there are plenty of persons among you who are competent to settle such questions, and thus save you the scandal of carrying your disputes before the heathen, when you have pledged yourself to lead a life above such considerations."

The Corinthian Christians had boasted of their superior wisdom and spiritual gifts; and it is for that reason that Paul's question in the latter part of verse 5 and in verse 6 must have been most humiliating. It is as if Paul had said, Can it be that a church which boasts so much of its wisdom, and which prides itself so much in its intelligent membership, does not have a single member who is wise enough to act as a judge between his brethren; with the result that brethren go to law with each other, and are put to the necessity of having to have unbelievers decide their cases?

Any one who reads the New Testament for what it says, will have to conclude that throughout the inspired record a distinction is made between the Lord's people and human governments. As long as the church and state remained separated, the Lord's people were on one side and those who were charged with the affairs of state were on the other. Christians are taught to obey the powers that be, support them by paying taxes, and recognize their existence by divine authority; but there is no indication in the inspired record whatsoever that the Lord's people ever had the need to call upon the courts of the land to resolve any differences which might arise between members of the church.

The Christian Alternative

(1 Cor. 6: 7, 8)

Nay, already it is altogether a defect in you, that ye have lawsuits one with another. Why not rather take wrong? why not rather be defrauded? Nay, but ye yourselves do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.

When we consider the implication of Paul's argument in this section of our text, it will be seen that there was a deeper mischief behind the scandal of the lawsuits, namely, their cause. "It is altogether a defect in you, that ye have lawsuits one with another." Arndt-Gingrich calls it

"an utter defeat for you." (Cf. Rom. 11: 12, where the term is rendered "loss," and is the only other instance of its use in the New Testament.) These litigious-minded brethren were defeated before they entered the heathen courts, where they took their cases. Therefore, it would be much better for them to "take wrong" than to "do wrong." Barnes notes that "greater evil would be done the cause of Christ by the fact of Christians appearing before a heathen tribunal with their disputes than could result to either party from the injury done by the other.—And this is probably *always* the case; so that although the apostle refers here to heathen tribunals the same reasoning, on the principle, would apply to Christians carrying their causes into the courts at all."

It has already been pointed out in this study that Jesus said that occasions of stumbling would arise; and any thoughtful person is aware that such is the case. Many people apparently assume this attitude, "I will neither do wrong, nor suffer it," by which they mean that they intend to treat every person fairly, and they demand the same response from others. This is more like the spirit of the priest and Levite "on the other side," than the spirit of the good Samaritan, which is the spirit which the Lord's people should manifest. It is never right, of course, for one to take advantage of his brother, or even to become involved in controversies which are suitable for court action; but the spirit of Christianity is to return good for evil, and to suffer wrong, rather than to do wrong.

Such sinful conditions as those referred to by Paul in our lesson text for today are always brought about by wrongdoing. "Nay, but ye yourselves do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren." Thus, instead of taking wrong and being defrauded, they were the aggressors. This, of course, implies both an offender and the offended; and as long as they are members of the Lord's family they must be subject to his law regarding his people. If that which the Lord says regarding both parties to the dispute is followed, there will be no question regarding the outcome.

The offender's duty is plainly set forth in such passages as Matt. 5:

23-26, which means that he is plainly obligated to seek a reconciliation; and that, in turn, means that in seeking to renew their fellowship in Christ, efforts must be made to correct the wrongs which have been done, to the best of the offender's ability. The offended has no right to demand more than this. But it frequently happens that the offender does not realize his duty, or will not do it; and this fact shifts the burden of responsibility to the shoulders of the offended. His duty is just as plainly set forth in such passages as Matt. 18: 15-17, as is the duty of the offender in the passage already referred to. The motive of the offended, if he is to please the Lord, must be to gain his brother, and he therefore should never make his actions look like he is seeking revenge. If his efforts at winning him fails, then he is plainly told what to do, and the attitude which he should manifest toward him. If these courses are sincerely followed by aggrieved brethren, there will not be any occasion to enter the courts of the land for the purpose of resolving their differences.

A Warning to the Disobedient (1 Cor. 6: 9-11)

Or know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.

Paul again introduces his "know ye not," as if to say, Don't you realize that sinners of every kind will be barred from the kingdom of God? The sin which they were committing was sin, just as the other ten types which he mentions. They were all in the category of the unrighteous, and Paul warns the disobedient Corinthian Christians not to be deceived about the matter. Godet notes that

"the Corinthians seemed to imagine that their religious knowledge and Christian talk would suffice to open heaven to them, whatever their conduct otherwise might be. But how do they fail to understand that by falling back into sin, from which faith had rescued them, they themselves destroy the effect of their transition from heathenism to the gospel?"

There are many professing Christians who apparently hold to the same idea which Godet suggests. They seem to think that the things which they do are not to be classed with the grosser sins which are committed by the people of the world. But sin is sin anywhere, and those who have been rescued from it have a greater responsibility regarding it. (Cf. 2 Pet. 2: 20-22.) This same principle was revealed to John, as may be seen by reading Rev. 21: 8: "But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death." Thayer says that the term "fearful" was used to describe those "Christians who through cowardice give way under persecution and apostatize." But even that is classed along with the blackest crimes in the catalogue of wrongdoers; and all will suffer the same fate. Paul's aim in his letter to the Corinthians was to warn them that if they continued their disobedience, they, too, would suffer the punishment of all wrongdoers.

Verse 11 tells of the spiritual change which had taken place in the lives of the Corinthian Christians when they were converted to Christ, and Paul's apparent object in bringing the matter before them was to emphasize the difference between the two lives, and to encourage them to remember their relationship to the Lord. They were washed from their sins when they were baptized (Acts 22: 16; Eph. 5: 26; Tit. 3: 5), and set apart (sanctified, 1 Cor. 1: 2) unto the Lord, as the justified in Christ. This was accomplished in the name of Christ, through the agency of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2: 38, 39; Tit. 3: 5).

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

How does the subject of this lesson fit into the general plan of the letter in which it is found?
Why do professed Christians ignore the New Testament teaching on this question?
What great danger comes to Christians from violating any command which the Lord has given?
What general bearing does a realization of the significance of the unity of God's people have on the subject now before us?
Discuss this question in the light of a well-ordered family life among men.
What warning did Jesus give regarding occasions of stumbling?

An Unbecoming Practice Condemned

In what way does Paul open the discussion of the question of litigation between brethren?
What is implied in the term "dare"?
Who was "his neighbor"?
Why did Paul probably speak about the matter only in general terms?
Who were the "unrighteous"?
Why was it improper for Christians to go before such tribunals with their troubles?
Under what circumstances may Christians properly go before the courts of the land?
What was Paul's probable reason for using the expression "know ye not" so often in the letter from which our lesson today is taken?
What is its significance in verses 2, 3?
What should be our attitude toward the question of judging the world and angels?

What was Paul's purpose in introducing those subjects?
Discuss the question which he asks in verses 5, 6.

What lesson should we learn regarding the distinction which the New Testament makes between the Lord's people and human governments?

The Christian Alternative

What deep mischief lay behind the lawsuits of the Corinthian Christians?
What did Paul mean by saying there was a "defect" in them?
Why did he exhort them to take wrong and be defrauded, rather than to have lawsuits?
What application does the principle in all this have for us?
What attitude did some of the Corinthian brethren apparently have regarding these matters?
What always happens before a lawsuit is instituted?
What is implied in "taking wrong" and in "being defrauded"?
What regulations does Jesus give for the "offender" and the "offended"?
Show how they can clear up any trouble between brethren, or resolve a difficulty.

A Warning to the Disobedient

What was the warning which Paul gave the disobedient and what disobedient?
Why mention so many gross sins?
What do many professed Christians apparently think of their sins, in comparison with those of the people of the world?
What important lessons should they learn in this connection?
What did Paul say regarding some of the Corinthian Christians?
What is the significance of "washed," "sanctified," and "justified"?
In what way was all of this accomplished?

Lesson VI—August 11, 1963

INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING MARRIAGE

Lesson Text

1 Cor. 7: 10-24

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.

16 For how knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O husband, whether thou shalt save thy wife?

17 Only, as the Lord hath distributed to each man, as God hath

called each, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all the churches.

18 Was any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Hath any been called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised.

19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but the keeping of the commandments of God.

20 Let each man abide in that calling wherein he was called.

21 Wast thou called being a bond-

servant? care not for it: nay, even if thou canst become free, use *it* rather.

22 For he that was called in the Lord being a bondservant, is the Lord's freedman: likewise he that was called being free, is Christ's bondservant.

23 Ye were bought with a price; become not bondservants of men.

24 Brethren, let each man, wherein he was called, therein abide with God.

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 COR. 7: 1-9.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Let *marriage be had in honor among all.*" (Heb. 13: 4.)

Daily Bible Readings

August 5. M.....	.....The First Marriage (Gen. 2: 21-25)
August 6. T.....	.....Marriage Honorable (Heb. 13: 1-5)
August 7. W.....	.....Marriage on Earth (Mark 12: 19-27)
August 8. T.....	.....Some Marriages Forbidden (Matt. 5: 32; 19: 1-9)
August 9. F.....	.....Christ Attended a Marriage (John 2: 1-11)
August 10. S.....	.....Marriage of the Lamb (Rev. 19: 1-8)
August 11. S.....	.....Paul Teaches about Marriage (Rom. 7: 1-7)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—First Corinthians was written from Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

The institution of marriage is as old as the family of man. God saw that it was not good for man to be alone, even in Paradise, and he formed and gave to him woman, that she might be a help meet for him; and this union, like that of the body and soul, is only to be severed by the hand of death. It is both interesting and profitable to observe that marriage is the oldest "rite" in human relationships; and it was celebrated in the world's beginning before God, himself being the sole Witness, Guest, and Minister. And what it was then, it still is now; for marriage has never fallen, but is what of Paradise lives over, continued still by God, to soothe the troubles and comfort the sorrows of our broken state.

F. W. Robertson has pointed out that marriage is not merely a union between two creatures, but rather a union between two spirits; and the intention of that bond is to perfect the nature of both, by supplementing their deficiencies with the force of contrast. This is to say that each gives to the other those excellencies which are lacking. For example, one

receives strength of character and firmness of moral will; while the other is given sympathy, meekness, and tenderness. Dr. Robertson continues, "And just so solemn and glorious as these ends are for which the union was intended, just so terrible are the consequences if it be perverted and abused; for there is no earthly relationship which has so much power to ennoble and to exalt. There are two rocks, in this world of ours, on which the soul must either anchor or be wrecked—the one is God, and the other is the sex opposite."

Some one has pointed out that a great proportion of the wretchedness which has embittered married life, is due to the neglect of trifles. Conubial happiness is a matter of too fine a texture to be handled roughly. It is a sensitive plant, which will not bear for long even the touch of unkindness. It is a delicate flower which can be easily chilled, and even blasted, by indifference and suspicion. It must be watered by the showers of tender affection, expanded by the cheering glow of kindness, and

guarded by the impregnable barrier of unshaken confidence. If it is matured in this way, it will bloom with

fragrance in every season of life, and will sweeten even the loneliness of declining years.

The Golden Text

"Let marriage be had in honor among all." As has already been pointed out, God made man and woman for each other; and marriage is therefore the most dignified, honorable, and helpful relationship into which they can enter. It is for this cause that a man shall "leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." (Gen. 2: 24.) In the words of Jeremy Taylor, "Marriage has in it less of beauty, but more of safety, than the single life; it hath not more ease, but less danger; it is more merry and more sad; it is fuller of sorrows and fuller of joys; it lies under more burdens, but is supported by the strengths of love and charity; and those burdens are delightful. Marriage is the mother of the world, and preserves kingdoms, and fills cities and churches, and heaven itself."

When Naomi decided to make an effort to arrange a marriage for her widowed daughter-in-law Ruth, she said unto her, "My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?" (Ruth 3: 1.) This is the true ideal of marriage. The "rest" of the wife should be in the affection of her husband, and the rest of the husband should lie in the love of his wife. Each should have comfort in the support and confidence of the other. The husband should always be sure of the sympathy and cooperation of his wife; and the wife should be able to rely implicitly on being understood, trusted, and, if need be, defended by her husband. They should be so nearly one that whatever comes to one, comes to both. Neither should add to the affliction of the other by putting his or her

weight on the load which must be borne. Instead, they should divide each other's burdens, and double each other's joys. The confidence of each in the other should be so absolute and entire as to give rest to the heart of each, whether in the trials of the business world, or in the "many things" which are so troublesome and distracting in the management of the household. Unless this is the case, marriage in that particular instance is shorn of its highest glory, its greatest helpfulness, and its holiest influence.

Just as true marriage is the highest blessedness which can come to men and women of our race, so a false marriage, a marriage conceived in vanity, avarice, or sensuality, is the most terrible calamity. The binding of two loveless, selfish people together can result only in mutual misery. It is true that not all the so-called Christian homes are happy; but, other things being equal, the husband and the wife whose love is centered on something great and noble outside and above themselves will love each other more, and will live more happily together. It is a principle of psychology, as well as a fact of human experience, that the highest friendship is formed, not by the love which two people have for each other, but in the common love which both have for something else—something outside of themselves. And what is there which can be greater than the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is this religion which makes our earthly friendships eternal; and love, which is the soul of friendship, is the fruit of true religion. A Christian marriage can always count on the help of the Lord to make it an honorable marriage.

The Text Explained

A Charge to Those Who Were Christians When They Married

(1 Cor. 7: 10, 11)

But unto the married I give charge, yea not I, but the Lord, That the wife depart not from her husband (but should she depart, let her remain unmarried, or else be recon-

ciled to her husband); and that the husband leave not his wife.

Verse 1 of the chapter from which our lesson for today is taken makes it plain that the Corinthian Christians wrote to Paul for some information on some very delicate and difficult matters. One is made to wonder why they did not request

some help regarding the problems of division, incest, litigation, and the abuse of Christian liberty, which the apostle discussed at length in the first six chapters of his letter; but a look at the general attitude of human nature may give us a clue as to the reason. People often want information regarding subjects which they may be discussing—subjects which may be of general interest, or even academic in their nature; but they frequently are not primarily concerned with those questions which directly concern their own moral conduct. The woman of Samaria was deeply interested in the question of where men should worship; but she apparently had little concern for her own sordid life. (See John 4: 15-20.)

The question of marriage is indeed a subject which should be discussed frequently, especially by the Lord's people, both in the home and in the assembly. And when this is done in the light of the full teaching of the Scriptures on the subject, it will be seen that there are several phases of the question to be considered. And it should also be noticed that a given passage does not always deal with every aspect of the over-all subject of the marriage relation; and if one isn't careful, he can fall into serious error, if this fact is not recognized and respected. Thus, the entire chapter from which our text for today is taken deals with the general subject of marriage; but it is easy to see, when the chapter is carefully analyzed, that Paul discusses several facets of the over-all question of that relationship.

Our first consideration for today is with reference to people who marry *after* they become Christians, which means that their married life is subject to the law of Christ. A scriptural marriage is the blending of the lives of two eligible persons of opposite sex into one through (1) mutual agreement on their part, (2) legal contract as authorized by the state, and (3) sexual cohabitation through which God makes them one. Such a union is further confirmed, sealed, and exemplified in the offspring. The two principals thus literally become one flesh; and there is no power which can separate their blended nature so long as their descendants survive.

Marriage in this sense is a status

or condition which, although originating in an agreement, is not capable of being terminated by the couple's repudiation of the agreement; because the interest of the state, society, and the children, to say nothing of regard for God's law, requires that certain permanent duties and obligations be placed upon the principals and continually discharged by them. Thus it can be seen that the question of marriage has been lifted out of the low region of mere personal taste, pleasure, and convenience, and placed in the high region of responsibility to God and others who are concerned with it.

In charging married Christians not to divorce their companions, Paul cited the teaching of Christ, not because his own word was in sufficient; but because the Lord had spoken categorically on the subject. (Cf. Matt. 5: 31, 32; 19: 3-12.) It was not the apostle's aim therefore to make a distinction between an inspired and an uninspired statement; but rather to remind his readers that they had no need to apply to him for instruction on the subject they asked about, since the Lord himself had spoken on it.

Some Bible students endeavor to make it appear that the teaching of Paul on the question of divorce actually supersedes the teaching of Jesus in the passages cited above. This idea is based on the principle that what Jesus said during his personal ministry is not applicable today, unless it was bound by the apostles. But if that type of reasoning is correct, then no one today has divine authority for baptizing any one "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28: 19); for the commission which embraces that command was given by Jesus before his law went into effect, and it was nowhere bound by the inspired apostles. This is sufficient to show the danger of such reasoning, as well as the need for wisdom in making some necessary distinctions. (Cf. 2 Tim. 2: 15.) In writing to the Corinthians regarding the subject in question, Paul was dealing with the basic aspect of the issue, and not with the moral exception which Jesus mentioned. There is therefore no difference between the teaching of Jesus and Paul on the question of marriage and divorce.

(For the benefit of any who may not understand it, the original word for "depart" literally means a separation or divorce. The same original term is used in Matt. 19: 6.)

Instruction for Those Who Were
Married When They Became
Christians
(1 Cor. 7: 12-16)

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. And the woman that hath an unbelieving husband, and he is content to dwell with her, let her not leave her husband. 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.

As already indicated, this section of our lesson has to do with the question of mixed marriages, that is, marriages in which one is a Christian and the other is not. Some people have hastily concluded that the passage just quoted allows, if it does not actually authorize, such marriages; but if they will only stop and consider the question in the light of the entire teaching of the Bible on the subject, they will see that such is not the case. In commenting on this passage, Nichol and Whiteside say, "Paul's injunction in 1 Cor. 7:

12-15 that a believer should not forsake an unbelieving companion is thought by some to justify mixed marriages; but the reverse is true, else why should the believer think that he should leave the unbeliever? Two unbelievers marry, and later one becomes a Christian. The thought would naturally come to the Christian under such circumstances, 'If it is wrong for the Christian to marry an unbeliever, is it right to live with an unbeliever?' With any other view, how could such a question arise?"

A settled conviction with reference to mixed marriages is sadly lacking among those who ought to know Jehovah's law regarding this question. Many seem to think that those who speak against such unions have no scriptural authority on which to base their teaching; but that the whole matter is more or less left up to the individual taste. Consequently, so far as the Bible is concerned, there

is a general indifference regarding this question. But, contrary to general opinion, the Bible clearly teaches that Jehovah has had a uniform law on mixed marriages in every age of the world. And furthermore, this law is not based on statutes arbitrarily imposed, but on the fundamental principles of the kingdom of heaven.

In saying, "But to the rest say I, not the Lord," Paul was simply making a distinction between the personal teaching of Jesus and that of his own. Jesus did speak on the question of divorce, but there is no recorded saying of his on the subject of mixed marriages. However, if any one doubts that Paul was speaking authoritatively, as an inspired apostle, let him read 1 Cor. 14: 37: "If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord." That which Paul wrote unto the Corinthians included the passage now under consideration.

The "sanctification" and "uncleanliness" mentioned by Paul in the verses now before us have reference to the marriage state, and not to the question of salvation from sin. Or, to express the same thing in other words, when one party of a previously consummated union became a Christian, that did not result in their marriage becoming adulterous.

Yet if he unbelieving departeth, let him depart: the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us in peace. For how knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O husband, whether thou shalt save thy wife?

Some people have endeavored to interpret the statement "the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases" so as to imply that the one who has been deserted because of religious conviction is free to marry another eligible person, during the lifetime of the deserter. But before any such conclusion is reached, it should be observed that the original words for "bondage" (*douloō*) and "bound" (*deo*) in 1 Cor. 7: 15 and 39 are not the same word. The one found in verse 15 (*douloō*) is the stronger word (see Thayer and Vin-

cent, *in loco*) and indicates that Christianity has not made the marriage relationship a state of slavery for the believer. Christians therefore are not required to forsake Christ in order to maintain the marriage bond with unbelieving companions. But this does not necessarily imply that the deserted believer is free to marry another person during the lifetime of the deserter, unless the unbeliever became guilty of adultery, and thereby furnished the occasion for breaking the marriage tie in God's sight.

The Lord does not want the legitimate marriage bond broken, and he has therefore ordained that it should be kept intact after one party to it becomes a Christian, in the hope that the other, too, may be led to Christ. This, however, is in no way related to the oft-heard statement that a Christian is justified in marrying out of covenant-relationship with God, in order to try to save a companion; and for one to use the passage for that purpose is to be guilty of mishandling the word of God. Such an idea should never be injected into the effort of trying to keep a married couple together, after one of them has obeyed the gospel. In the words of George Eliot, "What greater thing is there for two human souls than to feel that they are joined for life—to strengthen each other in all labor, to rest on each other in all sorrow, to minister to each other in all pain, to be one with each other in silent, unspeakable memories at the moment of the last parting"

Christianity and Human Relationships (1 Cor. 7: 17-24)

Only, as the Lord, hath distributed to each man, as God hath called each, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all the churches. Was any man called being circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but the keeping of the commandments of God. Let each man abide in that calling wherein he was called. Wast thou called being a bondservant? care not for it: nay, even if thou canst become free, use

it rather. For he that was called in the Lord being a bondservant, is the Lord's freedman: likewise he that was called being free, is Christ's bondservant. Ye were bought with a price; become not bondservants of men. Brethren, let each man, wherein he was called, therein abide with God.

This section of our lesson text is a part of Paul's over-all argument regarding the marriage relationship, and it must be understood in the light of the fact that God does not require that the marriage bond be broken when one of the principals becomes a Christian. In commenting on it, Ellicott says, "The believer is never to cause or promote a separation, for he is to be guided by the great principle that we are to continue to walk in those social and political relations by which we were bound when God called us. Christianity does not destroy them, but purifies and exalts them, and thus makes them more binding on us than before. According as the Lord has divided to each man his position in life, and as God has called each man, so in that condition let him walk as a Christian."

The two illustrations, circumcision and free or bondservant, are intended to emphasize the principle which Paul sets forth. A man who was circumcised before he became a Christian should not seek to become uncircumcised, by submitting to a surgical operation for that purpose (see Smith's Dictionary of the Bible); and neither is an uncircumcised man who obeys the gospel required to be circumcised. The same principle holds true with the person who is free and the slave. In commenting on verse 21, Vincent points out that "use it rather" is one of the most evenly balanced questions in the interpretation of the New Testament, that is, as to whether Paul means to take advantage of the offer of freedom, or remain a slave; he concludes that the force of "even," and the apostle's injunction in verses 20 and 24, seem to favor the meaning of remain in slavery. This conclusion is also substantially the view of David Lipscomb.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction
What can you say of the institution of marriage, with reference to its importance?

What is its real significance?

What are some of the usual causes of its failure?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstance were the words of this text written?

What is meant by having marriage in honor?

In what sense is marriage a "rest"?

Discuss some of the responsibilities both the husband and wife have in this respect.

What are some of the reasons for a false or unhappy marriage?

What is the basis for the highest friendship between two people, including husband and wife?

A Charge to Those Who Were Christians When They Married

How did Paul come to discuss the question of marriage at this time?

What probable reasons did the Corinthians have for not asking about the things discussed in the first six chapters?

What principle must be recognized in the study of the question now before us, if we are to understand it?

What phase of the over-all subject of marriage does Paul first discuss in this lesson?

Give a definition of a scriptural marriage.

What can you say of the permanence of the marriage relationship?

Why did Paul cite the authority of Christ in discussing this phase of the subject?

Does Paul mean to teach that adultery no longer is a ground for scriptural divorce? Give reason for your answer.

Instruction for Those Who Were Married

When They Became Christians

What phase of the question of marriage is discussed in this section of our lesson text?

Does this passage sanction "mixed marriages"? Give reasons for your answer.

What does the Bible teach with reference to God's law on the subject of "mixed marriages"?

Why is there such a lack of conviction on the subject among Christians today?

Why did Paul express his own authority here, rather than that of Christ?

How do we know that Paul spoke by inspiration?

In what sense did he speak of "sanctification" and "uncleanness" in this passage?

Why should a believer not leave an unbelieving companion?

In what sense is the believer not bound?

Christianity and Human Relationships

What is Paul's purpose in this section of our lesson text, as it respects the over-all subject of marriage?

What principle must always guide Christians with reference to human relationships?

What two illustrations did Paul use to emphasize this principle?

What did he say regarding the question of circumcision?

In what way does he handle the question of the free and the slave?

How should the slave feel toward his servitude?

What benefits do you feel that you have received from the study of this lesson?

Lesson VII—August 18, 1963

SUPPORT OF PREACHERS

Lesson Text

1 Cor. 9: 1-15

1 Am I not free? am I not an apostle? have I not seen Je'-sus our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?

2 If to others I am not an apostle, yet at least I am to you; for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.

3 My defence to them that examine me is this.

4 Have we no right to eat and to drink?

5 Have we no right to lead about a wife that is a believer, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Ce'-phas?

6 Or I only and Bar'-na-bas, have we not a right to forbear working?

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 Mó'-ses, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the com. 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 cause no 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.

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: 16-27.

Daily Bible Readings

August 12. M.	Paul's Support in Corinth (2 Cor. 11: 7-11)
August 13. T.	Philippian's Support of Paul (Phil. 4: 10-20)
August 14. W.	Do Good and Communicate (Heb. 13: 15-17)
August 15. T.	Teacher and the Taught (Gal. 6: 1-10)
August 16. F.	Willing to Communicate (1 Tim. 6: 17-19)
August 17. S.	Laborers Together with God (1 Cor. 3: 1-15)
August 18. S.	Paul's Reward (1 Cor. 9: 14-27)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—First Corinthians was written from Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

When Jesus sent the twelve apostles out under the limited commission, he said to them, “Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons: freely ye received, freely give. Get you no gold, nor silver, nor brass in our purses; no wallet for your journey, neither two coats, nor shoes, nor staff: for the laborer is worthy of his food.” (Matt. 10: 5-10.) And then just before his death, he said to them, “When I sent you forth without purse, and wallet, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. And he said unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise a wallet; and he that hath none, let him sell his cloak, and buy a sword.” (Luke 22: 35, 36.)

In going out under the first commission, the apostles were to labor among their own people—people who had been taught both hospitality and the need to support their teachers, and they would therefore have no occasion to provide for their own support. (Cf. 1 Tim. 5: 17, 18; Deut. 25: 4.) But following the death of Christ, they would be sent into all parts of the world with a gospel which showed that both Jews and

Gentiles were under sin (Gal. 3: 22; Rom. 11: 32), and would not therefore be among those who would feel obligated to supply their needs; and they were for that reason exhorted to make provisions themselves for them. This is sufficient to show that when people who are called by God's name are properly taught, they will contribute to the welfare of those who spend their time in God's service; but no such obligation is felt by those who are alien to him.

This is enough to show that the lesson before us today is most important. It is a part of God's plan through the ages for the support of those who devote their time to his service. But the lesson does not stop there; it emphasizes the need for self-sacrifice on the part of those who take the gospel to those who otherwise would not have the opportunity to hear it. The most of Paul's work was done in places where Christ had not been preached (Rom. 15: 20), and that made it often necessary for him to provide for his own support. However, there were times when brethren in established churches assisted him (Phil. 4: 10-17; 2 Cor. 11: 7-9); but the apostle to the Gentiles more often than not preferred to support himself. There was a reason for this, as we shall see further on in this lesson; and it should not be regarded as a precedent for gospel preachers generally to follow.

The Golden Text

"But let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things." The manner in which this statement is made implies a positive duty on the part of those who are the beneficiaries of gospel teaching. The term "communicate" literally means to give or contribute a share, give someone a share of something (Arndt-Gingrich). The context of the passage now before us, if carefully read, will give a much broader view of the spirit of helpfulness which Paul urged upon the Galatian churches. "But let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith." (Gal. 6: 6-10.)

Those who are familiar with Paul's writings are aware of the fact that he frequently enforced the common duties of life by very high motives. For example, when he urged the Corinthian brethren to make a contribution for the relief of the poor saints at Jerusalem, he drove home his appeal in these words: "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.) The same was true when he sought to defend himself from the charge of undue zeal in his effort to lead men to Christ, as may be seen by reading 2 Cor. 5: 11-15. And so, when he wanted to impress upon the Galatians the need for supporting Christian teachers, along with others who might be in want of the material things of life, he linked his exhortation with these words: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Macknight paraphrases verses 6-8 of the passage just quoted in these words: "Now let him who is instructed in the doctrines and precepts of the gospel, impart a share of all the good things he enjoys to the instructor. By this good work, ye may have matter of boasting in yourselves, verse 4. To maintain them who teach you, is your duty. Therefore do not deceive yourselves, God will not be mocked: For, as in the natural so in the moral world, whatever a man soweth, that also he shall reap. Therefore he who, by spending his time and wealth in gratifying his sensual desires, soweth into his own flesh, shall from such a sensual life, reap corruption; the utter destruction of his soul and body. But he who by spending his time and wealth in improving his mind, and in doing good to others, soweth into his spirit, shall, from such sowing into the spirit, assuredly reap life everlasting."

The Text Explained

Paul's Apostolic Status
(1 Cor. 9: 1-6)

Am I not free? am I not an apostle? have I not seen Jesus our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, yet at least I am to you; for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord. My defence to them that examine me is this. Have we no right to eat and to drink? Have we no right to lead about a wife that is a believer, even as the rest of the apostles, and the

brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? Or I only and Barnabas, have we not a right to forbear working?

The text of our lesson for today is taken from the second general section of Paul's letter to the Corinthians, which we know as First Corinthians. This section embraces that which he wrote from 8: 1 to 11: 1, and is concerned with the over-all subject of the relation of Christians and idolatry. If one will read all of the section from which our lesson

text is taken, he will see that there is a fairly close relationship between the topics which he discusses. For example, in chapter 8 he sets forth the general principles which should govern Christians in their attitude toward each other, and concludes with this statement: "Wherefore, if meat causeth my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh for evermore, that I cause not my brother to stumble." The attitude thus expressed was Paul's privilege as a Christian, with reference to things not commanded, that is, to things indifferent in and of themselves.

And then, to illustrate the matter further, he shows that the principle which he had just stated had ever been the rule of his own life. Or, to state the same thing in another way, he points out that he had not insisted on his rights in the gospel for the sake of the progress of the work. "Nevertheless we did not use this right; but bear all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ." (Verse 12.) This illustration taken from Paul's own experience not only confirmed his teaching in the previous chapter, but also gave him the opportunity of presenting some needed teaching regarding the attitude of the Corinthian brethren toward him. The church in Corinth was established by Paul (cf. Acts 18: 1-11), but after he left the city, the Judaizers, who were Paul's bitter enemies, apparently got control of the situation there, and almost succeeded in turning the Corinthian brethren against their father in the gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 4: 14, 15).

The enemies of Paul had charged that he was not a genuine apostle, and that his refusal to accept compensation for his services clearly indicated that he himself knew that he was not entitled to such support. If it seems strange to us that Paul had to defend his own apostolic status in a place he himself had planted the church (1 Cor. 3: 6), we have only to look about us today in order to see congregations which no longer recognize as being faithful to the Lord, those godly preachers who actually established them. Human nature always remains substantially the same; and when hobby-riding teachers gain access into a church, it will not take them long to turn the brethren against their former teachers, un-

less they themselves are grounded in the faith. But even those who are grounded in the truth may find it difficult to prevent a split in the congregation, if there are very many who can be swayed by the sophistry of the false teachers.

The method by which Paul sought to show the fallacy of the charge that he was not an apostle was in the form of a series of questions; and they were so stated as to require an affirmative answer. For example, Paul was a free man, and was therefore not required to work as a slave. He was an apostle, for he had seen the Lord and had received his appointment from him; and "truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, by signs and wonders and mighty works." (2 Cor. 12: 12.) Furthermore, if it could be proved that Paul was not an apostle in the eyes of others, he was to the Corinthians; "for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord." The facts which were implied in the questions of verse 1 and the statement of verse 2 constituted Paul's defense of his apostleship.

After presenting conclusive proof that he was a genuine apostle, along with the groundlessness of the charges which his enemies urged against him, Paul next vindicated for himself and his fellow-workers, particularly Barnabas, certain rights in the gospel, including (1) a livelihood, (2) a Christian wife, and (3) a release from the necessity of manual labor for their support. Here again he employs the question method in presenting his argument; and the obvious answer to all three of the questions in this group is, "Yes, indeed." It should also be observed that the three "rights" which are pointed out actually amount to *one*, as may be gathered from the following verses; and if Paul had merely claimed the support of a gospel preacher from the Lord's people whom he served, it would have in reality included all three of the rights which he mentioned. Paul's reference to a "wife that is a believer" is also significant.

The Right of Ministerial Support Illustrated

(1 Cor. 9: 7-10)

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. Do I speak these things after the manner of men? or saith not the law also the same? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn. Is it for the oxen that God careth, 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.

No one can enter into the spirit of the questions which Paul asks in this section of our lesson, without reaching the conclusion which he intended, namely, God's ordained rule that those who serve in his vineyard be adequately supported. This is true, regardless of the attitude which the servant in question may take toward the matter. It is God's will that his ministers be properly compensated, so far as those who are served are concerned; but that does not mean that the one who does the work is required to accept the support. It frequently happens that conditions are present in a given situation which make it unwise, if not indeed entirely improper, for a preacher to accept support for his services. This would be true in any case which would result in a hindrance to the work. But more about this in the next section of our lesson for today.

It is a basic principle in the economy of God, whether with reference to material or spiritual matters, that the workman receive a livelihood from the fruits of his labors. Even the animals of the brute creation are entitled to that consideration. In asking, "Is it for the oxen that God careth, or saith he it assuredly for our sake?" Paul does not mean to imply that God is not concerned for the welfare of the animal. The prohibition against muzzling the ox when he treads out the corn is proof that God does care for the brute creation (cf. Matt. 10: 29-31); but what Paul is saying here is that the precept of Moses was not primarily for the oxen's sake, but for that of man. His emphasis is on the typical and spiritual significance of the command.

All legitimate work, whether in the material or spiritual realm, should always be characterized by hope; for it is only in this way that one is ex-

cited to further activities. No farmer would continue to prepare his soil and cultivate his crop, if he did not hope to reap a harvest; and the same principle is applicable to any other line of endeavor. Even the gospel preacher, if he did not have some other way of providing for his needs and those of his dependents, could not put his heart and the full strength of his being into his work; for, as in the case of the husbandman and the reaper, he too must toil "in hope of partaking." This is where the apostle places the emphasis in this section of our lesson. If brethren everywhere would learn this lesson well, there would be fewer instances in which little or no effort is made to provide adequate support for those who labor among them "in the word and in teaching."

Paul's Attitude toward Such
Compensation
(1 Cor. 9: 11-15)

If we sowed unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we shall reap your carnal things? 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 cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.

In this part of the text, Paul appeals to the sense of justice in the Corinthian brethren. He and his fellow-laborers had made it possible for them to enjoy the greatest of spiritual blessing; and now he asks them, Does it seem out of proportion for the spiritual laborers to receive, in turn, material support? Almost the entire lesson text for today is made up of questions which, if the Corinthians made an honest effort to answer correctly, they would have to admit that their father in the gospel was right and they were wrong. There are few better ways of getting the truth of a proposition over to one who needs to learn it, than by the question and answer method. This is especially true, if the teacher is himself fair and knows how to frame his questions.

It is clear from verse 12 that other teachers, in all probability those who were opposed to Paul, were supported by the Corinthian Christians; and while the apostle does not deny that any faithful teacher deserves to be supported in his work, he does make

it plain that his claim, so far as the church there was concerned, was paramount. It often happens, even today, that a faithful, self-sacrificing gospel preacher sows the word in a community, with the result that a congregation is established; and then as it grows larger and stronger the desire for a more popular man comes to the front, and the founder of the church is all but forgotten. In the words of David Lipscomb, any man who allows himself to be so used ought to be regarded as unworthy of countenance or support. It is not wrong for a congregation to change preachers; but it is sinful for them to disregard the labors of those who have made the very existence of the congregation possible.

Although Paul was clearly entitled to the material support of the Corinthian brethren, he "did not use this right;" but instead made great personal sacrifices that he "cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ." Paul's motive could easily have been misunderstood, if he had requested and received compensation as he was endeavoring to plant the church in Corinth; and the same would have been true before the church was taught the truth regarding such matters. And, too, false or misguided teachers could and actually did impugn his motives with reference to such matters. (See 2 Cor. 11: 7-9.) Paul's enemies even accused him of deceit with reference to the contribution which he was urging the churches to make for the poor saints in and around Jerusalem. After emphasizing the fact that he himself had not and would not be a burden to the Corinthians, they replied, as the apostle expressed the matter, "But be it so, I did not myself burden you; but, being crafty. I caught you with guile,"

that is, I was actually urging the contribution, not for the benefit of the poor in Jerusalem, but for my own self! (See 2 Cor. 12: 14-18.) There are many reasons therefore why it is sometimes wise for a preacher not to accept material support for the work he is doing in religious service. One's mere right is not always a sufficient reason for him to claim such support.

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

After discussing his personal attitude toward the support of religious teachers, Paul now returns to the subject proper, and states the irresistible conclusion regarding the matter. God himself has authorized that those who preach the gospel shall live of the gospel, just as those who serve in the temple and at the altar have their portion of the offering made there. While the preacher may decline to accept the support (see Paul's further reasons regarding the question is verses 16ff.), that in no way relieves the church from providing it to the best of its ability. It is good to be able to think that most congregations today do take this matter seriously and make adequate provisions for those who labor in the gospel; but for those who do not, it will be well for them to consider carefully that which the Bible says regarding this question.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What difference was made regarding provision for the support of the apostles under their first and second commissions?

Why was this difference made?

What bearing does this have on the lesson for today?

The Golden Text

What is implied by the manner in which the golden text is stated?

Under what circumstances did Paul write the words of this text?

How did Paul frequently enforce the duties which he enjoined?

What is the value of this type of teaching?

Discuss Macknight's paraphrase of the passage in which the golden text is found.

Paul's Apostolic Status

How did Paul come to discuss his apostolic status at this time?

What can be said of his life in the light of his teaching?

Why was Paul so bitterly criticised by some of the people in Corinth?

What effect did this have on his attitude toward financial support from that church?

In what way did Paul seek to show the fallacy of the charges made against him?

What are some of the rights which gospel preachers have in the gospel?

The Right of Ministerial Support Illustrated

In what way did Paul illustrate this subject?

What effect should this have on churches today?

Is it always necessary for the preacher to accept such support? Give reasons for your answer.

What is the principal lesson which we learn from the illustrations which Paul used?

What place does "hope" have in the lesson now before us?

What would happen regarding the question now before us if brethren everywhere considered it in the light of this hope?

Paul's Attitude toward Such Compensation

What appeal does Paul make in this section of the lesson text?

Why was Paul entitled to support from the church in Corinth?

Why didn't he receive it?

What should be the attitude of congregations toward the men who established them?

Why do churches sometimes "forget" the efforts of self-sacrificing, godly preachers who really made their spiritual blessings possible?

What should be the attitude of preachers regarding this question?

What were some of the reasons which apparently led Paul to decline support from the church in Corinth?

Name some circumstances which might make it unwise for preachers today to accept support from some places.

What is Paul irresistible conclusion regarding the divine will for the support of preachers?

In what way does he illustrate the question?

What is the general rule of the churches today regarding this subject?

Lesson VIII—August 25, 1963

AN EXAMPLE FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

Lesson Text

1 Cor. 10: 1-13

1 For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

3 And did all eat the same spiritual food;

4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them: and the rock was Christ.

5 Howbeit with most of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

9 Neither let us make trial of the Lord, as some of them made trial, and perished by the serpents.

10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them murmured, and perished by the destroyer.

11 Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come.

12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition."* (1 Cor. 10: 11.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Cor. 10: 14-33.

Daily Bible Readings

- August 19. M. Christ's Use of the Old Testament (Mark 12: 18-27)
- August 20. T. Searching the Scriptures (John 5: 37-45)
- August 21. W. Scriptures Profitable (2 Tim. 3: 14-17)

August 22. T..... Old Testament Examples (Matt. 21: 42-46)
 August 23. F..... Teaching by Example (John 13: 1-15)
 August 24. S..... Christ Our Example (1 Pet. 2: 18-21)
 August 25. S..... Be Example for Others (1 Tim. 4: 12-16)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—First Corinthians was written from Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

The Old Testament Scriptures are a part of God’s revelation to man, and, as such, they should be so recognized by every one who desires to please the Lord. It is nothing less than tragic for any one to feel that the Old Testament, which prepared the way for the coming of Christ, should be relegated to a state of uselessness; and especially since there is no intimation from God that such is his will. The Old and New Testaments are so interwoven as to make it impossible to understand one without the other. Someone has said that the Old Testament is the New Testament concealed; and that the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.

It is true that the Old Testament is not a guide for God’s people today; but that does not mean that it has no value for them. The entire Bible may be looked upon as God’s progressive revelation of the scheme of human redemption; and since that is true, it is essential, of course, that the whole history be carefully studied, so that we may have a clearer view of just how the divine plan for saving the race was worked out. But one does not go very far in considering that which has been said about the Old Testament, especially in our day, before he will be made to realize that there are some extreme positions with reference to that part of the Holy Scriptures. One view, for example, holds that the Old Testament, along with the New, contains God’s will for people today; and that one therefore can learn the plan of salvation for people now from the Old Testament, as well as he can from the New. Another such view is that since the Old Testament does not contain God’s will for people of this age, it follows that that part of the Bible is of no practical value for people of today. The error of both of these views, however, will appear as we proceed with this study.

When Paul wrote his letter to the

Romans, he said, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope.” (Rom. 15: 4.) He had just quoted a statement from Psalm 69: 9, and he then went on to tell his readers that God meant for his people in this dispensation to learn something from the Old Testament—something which we could not learn so well from any other source. This is the practical value of the Old Testament for us. That part of God’s revelation to man is the record of the spiritual experiences of a people, experiences which were unique, prolonged, manifold, and momentous, experiences which embody and disclose the ways by which God worked in former ages, the methods by which he drew men near to him, and the discipline under which he trained and elevated them.

From first to last, the historical period covered in the Old Testament Scriptures is some four thousand years long, and embraces two distinct dispensations, but the law of that part of God’s revelation, that is, the law given through Moses, was for the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. Beginning with Abraham, and for the next two thousand years, a continuous narrative is gradually unfolded. We do not know all writers of that narrative, nor all the people whose lives were affected by that which was done through the years; but they all bear witness to the will, character, and method with which the Lord deals with the souls and bodies of men. And since he is the Eternal and Sovereign Ruler who changes not, we can learn from the Old Testament what his perpetual mode of dealing with his people is—his moral character, his Fatherly attitude, his rule of conduct, and his method of punishing the wicked and bringing the righteous to ultimate victory. All of

these things are significant for us today; since they show how the Eternal God will prove himself to be the same to us as he was to those who lived during the past ages and who put their trust in him. He never failed them, and he will never fail us. David Lipscomb expressed the matter in this way: "We are taught in the Old Testament how God applies his laws; in the New Testament the perfect laws are given." The Old Testament therefore tells us what to expect from God, as we live under the New; for the same type of loyalty is required now as it was then.

Someone has observed that the Bible is the mirror of ourselves; it is the story of our own lives. We find ourselves everywhere in it; and those lives which were lived so long ago help to explain us to ourselves. No book ever revealed us to ourselves for what we are, as does the Bible,

especially as it respects our possibilities for holiness or the depths of sin and shame into which we so often are prone to fall. Those who read this old record carefully are soon aware of the fact that we miss nothing of all that we have ever felt. In the words of A. R. Gordon, "In no myth or tragedy of the ancient world have we so deep an insight into the character and workings of sin, or so remorseless an analysis of its effects in feeling and conscience, and in alienation of the heart from God. Nor have we, apart from the Hebrew Scriptures, such hope rising from the darkness of sin and death as appears here in the thought of God's mercy tempering his justice." Yes, the Old Testament is a wonderful book, and it will be well for us to consider with care the examples which have been recorded therein for our admonition.

The Golden Text

This portion of our lesson is found in the main text, and will be considered in its proper order.

The Text Explained

Initial Obedience Does Not Ensure Continuous Favor with God

(1 Cor. 10: 1-5)

For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual food; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them: and the rock was Christ. Howbeit with most of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

The word "for" with which the chapter from which our lesson text is taken begins, connects that which is about to be said with that which was said in the closing part of the preceding chapter. Paul had just showed his readers the great need for watchfulness, using his own case as an example; and now, taking the experience of Israel, he seeks to enforce the same lesson. Paul's purpose here will be plainer to us, if we keep in mind the fact that Israel, in a very real sense, was a type of the church of the New Testament. Stephen, in fact, refers to the people

of Israel as the church in the wilderness. (See Acts 7: 38.) Moses was a type of Christ (Acts 3: 22ff.), and Paul shows in the lesson now before us that the people of Israel sustained the same relationship to him, as the Lord's people today do to Christ.

When Moses led the people of Israel out of Egypt, they came to the Red Sea; and while they were encamped there, their former masters were in hot pursuit of them. When the Israelites realized their desperate situation, they cried unto Moses; and it was then that God arranged for their salvation from the Egyptians. The sea was divided before them, with a wall of water on each side; and with the cloud over them, they were completely hidden from the view of the enemy and were baptized, that is immersed, in the cloud and in the sea. Paul says that they were baptized unto (*eis*, unto or into) Moses, which means that they were pledged or committed to Moses as their leader, in the same manner in which Christians are related to Christ.

Having thus been brought under the authority of Moses through the act of baptism, the Israelites became the "church in the wilderness;" and

it was only through loyalty to their new leader that they could enjoy unbroken fellowship with God who had made possible their salvation. The food and drink which were necessary to sustain their life in their new relationship were provided by the Lord. But in spite of these marvelous experiences, God was not well pleased with most of them, and their bodies were left to perish in the wilderness. The writer of Hebrews explains the unhappy lot of these people in these words: "And with whom was he displeased forty years? was it not with them that sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that were disobedient? And we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief." (Heb. 3: 17-19.)

The experiences of Israel which Paul sets before us should enable us to become more aware of the privileges which we have in Christ today. It makes no difference how weak and ineffective we may think ourselves to be, or how poor, isolated, and useless we really are, we are all under the guiding hand of the Lord. We have been delivered out of the bondage of sin, as a result of the sacrificial death of Jesus; and we have all been baptized into him, and are therefore subject to his authority and leadership every day of our lives. Furthermore, we are sustained by the spiritual blessings which are daily provided for us. (Cf. Eph. 1: 3; Heb. 4:

14-16.) We are even promised that our material needs will be supplied, if we are true to our trust in the Lord. (See Matt. 6: 24-34; Phil. 4: 19.) These tremendous ties bind us to each other in the Lord; and there is no power on earth, or anywhere else, which can separate us from his love, care, and protection, except our own sinful wills. (Read Rom. 8: 31-39.) With all of these great blessings and promises within our grasp, the one great question is, How can we fail? But the fact is, as Alan Redpath points out, the greater the height, the greater the fall. This is why Paul points out the seriousness of the failure of Israel, and the lesson which it has for us.

The Moral Contagion of Idolatry (1 Cor. 10: 6-11)

Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust

after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us make trial of the Lord, as some of them made trial, and perished by the serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them murmured, and perished by the destroyer. Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come.

The fall of the Israelites in the wilderness was due to the very temptations which surrounded the Corinthians at the time Paul wrote the letter from which our text for today is taken. These temptations included the allurements of idolatry and its attendant impurities. Under the general heading of lusting after evil things, Paul mentions four specific sins which the Israelites committed, namely, (1) the idolatry surrounding the golden calf, during which time the people ate and drank to the idol, and then rose up to celebrate the occasion by means of the songs and dances which accompanied such worship. (See Ex. 32: 1-6.) These idolatrous dances were usually characterized by licentiousness, and were generally indecent; and as such, they were wholly unbecoming to God's people.

(2) The second example of Israel's sin which Paul cited was that recorded in Num. 26: 1-9. Balaam had endeavored to curse the Lord's people at the request of Balak, but God blessed them instead; and it was then that Balaam showed Balak how that he might get God himself to curse them, namely, by casting "a stumblingblock before the children of Israel," involving the eating of things sacrificed to idols, and committing fornication. (See Rev. 2: 14.) Both the eating of the food and the adultery were part and parcel of the idolatry. It will be observed that Moses says that there were twenty-four thousand slain, while Paul puts the number at twenty-three thousand. This apparent discrepancy has been explained in a number of ways, as for example, twenty-three thousand were slain by the plague, and one

thousand were killed by Phinehas; twenty-three thousand were killed the first day, and one thousand the next; the total number slain was *between* twenty-three and twenty-four thousand, and since the Jews usually dealt in round numbers, the number could be correctly stated by either figure—Moses gave the maximum number slain, while Paul gave the minimum. It is also possible that the seeming contradiction was the result of an error made by a copyist, but it is inconceivable that Paul's memory was at fault, as some have suggested; for he was inspired.

(3) The third sin referred to in the text now before us was that which is recorded in Num. 21: 4-9. (See also John 3: 14, 15.) This was the sin of *unbelief*, while those listed in verses 7, 8 were sins of *sensuality*. It is always a sin of unbelief for one to doubt the promises of God, or, which is the same thing, to fail to put one's trust in him. This can be done in many ways. For example, Christ has promised to save those who obey the gospel; but think how few are willing to trust in him after that manner! And, too, he has promised to supply the needs of those who seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; but how often do God's people fail to accept this promise at face value!

(4) Israel frequently murmured against God, but the reference which is cited by Paul was probably that which is recorded in Num. 14: 2, 29. This was on the occasion of the false report which was given by ten of the spies who were sent to ascertain the condition of the land of Canaan, before the people were willing to enter. This was another instance of their unbelief in God. Another instance of Israel's murmuring against Jehovah was that in connection with the rebellion of Korah. (See Num. 16: *Iff.*) This, of course, could have been the one which was in the mind of Paul when he wrote to the Corinthians. The lesson in both instances is the same—punishment for their unbelief.

All of the cases which Paul cited in Israel's history were exemplary in their nature; and their history serves as a lesson for all time, including those who live in the final dispensation, that is, the Christian dispensation. This is one of the reasons why

the Old Testament record will always be a source of valuable and vital information for us; for it is there we learn how God administered his laws in dealing with his people, and this will show us what to expect from the perfect administration of Christ, during which time he is seeking to bring men back to God.

A Practical Warning and a Blessed Assurance

(1 Cor. 10: 12, 13)

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it.

The examples which Paul cited in the previous section of our lesson text are full of warning, as he emphasizes in verse 12; but he hastens to add in verse 13 a word of great encouragement. Any one who reads the Old Testament should know that the devil is never at ease in his efforts to lead God's people astray. He began his work in the garden of Eden, and has continued to the present. "Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom withstand stedfast in your faith, knowing that the same sufferings are accomplished in your brethren who are in the world." (1 Pet. 5: 8, 9.)

The fact that a person feels himself secure in Christ is by no means proof that he is safe. This is the force of Paul's warning in verse 12: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Satan does not always come out in the open in his efforts to lead people astray. Instead, he employs every possible means to deceive the innocent. The writer of Hebrews warns, "But exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called To-day; lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." (Heb. 3: 13.) People who are deceived do not realize what is taking place until the deed has been accomplished, for if they did, they could do something about it; for no one wants to be the victim of deceit.

The practical way through which

the devil seeks to win people to his manner of living is that of worldliness; but even here many of the Lord's people are led astray, because of their mistaken idea of the meaning of worldliness. Too many otherwise thoughtful people are content to think that worldliness consist in indulging in popular amusements, such as card playing, dancing, indiscriminate attendance of moving picture shows, and mixed bathing, along with other like practices. One would like to believe, of course, that every well-informed and fair-minded person is fully aware of the evil tendencies of such indulgences, and the shipwreck of character which so often results; but any one who is willing to consider the subject thoroughly will have to admit that such a conception of worldliness is far too narrow.

Worldliness does not consist solely in doing certain things, or in being in certain places; it is, instead, an attitude or view of life, a state of mind. (Cf. Rom. 12: 1. 2.) A person might be in a most worldly atmosphere, and not be at home; and he might be in a thoroughly spiritual atmosphere, but far away in both mind and spirit. Worldliness is a view of the present which ignores both the past, with its teaching and examples, and the future with its promises and warnings. It is a view which one may hold quite apart from

environments; and this is why it is so often fatal to the individual. (Cf. 1 John 2: 15-17; James 4: 4.)

But God has made it abundantly clear that he can be depended upon when his people are sincerely desirous of overcoming the world. "But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it." This passage assures us that we can depend upon God for help; and if we will read James 1: 2-8, we can easily see how God implements his promise of faithfulness. "But if any of you lacketh wisdom [in dealing with temptation or anything else], let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord; a doubleminded man, unstable in all his ways." (James 1: 5-8.) God is faithful, and he requires faithfulness in those who seek his help. (Cf. Heb. 11: 6.) No finer commentary on the passage now under consideration can be found than that which is contained in Rom. 8; it should be read by every child of God carefully and often.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

In what way should the Old Testament be regarded by people today?
Discuss the manner in which the two Testaments are related to each other.
Show clearly why the Old Testament is not a guide for people of this age.
What, then, is its special value to us?
Name some popular erroneous views of the Old Testament which are held now.
Give a brief outline of that which is contained in the Old Testament.
What are some of the special lessons we should learn from that part of God's revelation?
Discuss the manner in which we can see ourselves by studying the Old Testament.

Initial Obedience Does Not Ensure Continuous Favor with God

What is the purpose and force of the term "for" with which our lesson text begins?
In what way were the people under Moses related to those under Christ?
Discuss the manner in which the people

of Israel came under the authority of Moses.
In what way were they "baptized into Moses"?
How did the people of that period become the church in the wilderness?
Under what circumstances only could they then be pleasing to God?
In what way was their spiritual life sustained?
How can we account for their falling into disfavor with God?
What important lessons should we learn from these experiences of Israel?
What are the ties which bind us to the Lord?
Why is it essential that we know how to keep from falling away from God?

The Moral Contagion of Idolatry

What were the immediate causes of the fall of Israel?
How are they related to the causes of the fall of many people today?
What four specific examples did Paul cite?
Give the historical background of each of them.
What was the nature of the sins involved in each of the cases?
What is the difference between the sins of *sensuality* and those of *unbelief*?

Why does Paul say that these examples were recorded?
 What lesson does this fact teach us?
 What effect should all of this have on our attitude toward the study of the Old Testament?

A Practical Warning and a Blessed Assurance

What is Paul's conclusion regarding the examples of Israel's sin which he cited?
 What word of encouragement did he then offer?
 Why is it so important that people take heed lest they fall?

Why can't Christians depend upon their feelings for their safety in Christ?
 Discuss the manner in which Satan works in his efforts to lead people astray.
 When is it that people realize that they have been deceived?
 Discuss "worldliness" as a means by which the devil seeks to draw people to himself.
 What is the real meaning and significance of worldliness?
 What promise has God made to his people regarding their safety in Christ?
 In what way may we be sure that we can depend upon his promise?

Lesson IX—September 1, 1963

IMPROPER OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Lesson Text

1 Cor. 11: 20-34

20 When therefore ye assemble yourselves together, it is not possible to eat the Lord's supper:

21 For in your eating each one taketh before *other* his own supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken.

22 What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and put them to shame that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you? In this I praise you not.

23 For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Je'-sus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread;

24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me.

25 In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as often as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me.

26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come.

27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.

28 But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup.

29 For he that eateth and drinketh, eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself, if he discern not the body.

30 For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep.

31 But if we discerned ourselves, we should not be judged.

32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

33 Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, wait one for another.

34 If any man is hungry, let him eat at home; that your coming together be not unto judgment. And the rest will I set in order whensoever I come.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"This do in remembrance of me." (Luke 22: 19.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Cor. 11: 17-19.

Daily Bible Readings

August 26. M.....	Institution of the Supper (26: 26-30)
August 27. T.....	Supper in the Kingdom (Luke 22: 14-23)
August 28. W.....	Mark's Account of the Supper (Mark 14: 17-26)
August 29. T.....	Memorial Feasts (Ex. 12: 1-11)
August 30. F.....	Christ Our Passover (1 Cor. 5: 1-13)
August 31. S.....	Ordinances of First Covenant (Heb. 9: 1-10)
September 1. S.....	Superiority of Christ's Way (Heb. 9: 11-28)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—First Corinthians was written from Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

It was during the time of the last passover supper which Jesus ate with his disciples that he instituted the Lord's supper; and in doing so, he distinctly tells his people in what respect he wants them to remember him. His own death for the sins of the world was only a matter of hours away; and it was that death which would have such a vital place in the thoughts of his disciples, if they were to be pleasing to him. But Jesus does not want his death to be remembered as the tragic end of a noble career, which might be hallowed by tears such as are shed over a martyr's ashes; nor even as the crowning proof of his love for them; but rather as the death which was necessary for the remission of the sins of the world. It is only when Christians realize that the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross was the only possible way of redemption from sin, that the Lord's supper can have to them the meaning which Christ meant for it to have.

One has only to read the history of the Bible in order to see that people in all ages of the world have sought to add something to that which the Lord specifies, in an effort to show their devotion to him; and it was for this reason that God frequently forbade any additions to that which he said and did. The Lord's supper, as has already been noted, was instituted during the passover feast; and since there were two suppers then, the passover supper and the Lord's supper, some early Christians conceived the idea of having a "love feast" in connection with the celebration of the Lord's supper. This extra feast is specifically referred to by Jude (verse 12), and very probably by Peter (2 Pet. 2: 13) and Paul (1 Cor. 11: 20-22).

The origin of the "love feast" (Greek, *agapae*) is not definitely

known; but its evident purpose was to promote a fuller sense of brotherhood among the early followers of Christ. The *love feast* and the Lord's supper were two entirely different institutions, the one of human and the other of divine origin. *Smith's Dictionary of the Bible* says that the correct account of the origin of the love feast is that which was given by Chrysostom, who says that "after the early community of goods had ceased, the richer members brought to the church contributions of food and drink, of which, after the conclusion of the services and the celebration of the Eucharist [an improper name for the Lord's supper], all partook together, by this means helping to promote the principle of love among Christians." (Vol. II, page 1688.)

Bible students are not agreed as to the time of the love feast in relation to the Lord's supper. Some think that it came before, and some after; but there is fairly general agreement as to its purpose—that of "an external expression of the sense of brotherhood which was characteristic of the primitive Christian churches, and they were no doubt suggested by similar institutions, which seem to have been common among both Jews and Gentiles. It is also probable that the recollection of the Last Supper of our Lord with his disciples was an additional cause of the holding of these meals." (*Dictionary of the Apostolic Church*, Vol. I., Hastings, p. 717.) The importance of the question of the early "love feasts" to us lies in the relation which it apparently had with the Lord's supper, in the church in Corinth; and as we shall see further on in this study, it became the occasion for some needed teaching regarding Christian conduct.

The Golden Text

"*This do in remembrance of me.*" These words, taken from Luke's account of the institution of the Lord's supper, are identical with those used

by Paul in the lesson text for today; and since this is true, we shall consider them in their place in the text now before us.

The Text Explained

Some Disqualifying Disorders in Connection with the Worship

(1 Cor. 11: 20-22)

When therefore ye assemble yourselves together, it is not possible to eat the Lord's supper: for in your eating each one taketh before other his own supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and put them to shame that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you? In this I praise you not.

As Paul began the discussion of the two questions contained in the chapter from which our lesson text for today is taken, he said, "Now I praise you that ye remember me in all things, and hold fast the traditions, even as I delivered them to you;" but when he reminded them of the shameful condition which prevailed in the church during the time of their Lord's day worship, he told them that he could not praise them in that. He opened the discussion of this portion of our lesson for today with these words: "But in giving you this charge, I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also factions among you, that they that are approved may be made manifest among you." (1 Cor. 11: 17-19.)

It is very probable, as has already been suggested, that this unsatisfactory and, consequently, unacceptable situation grew out of the abuse of the love feast, which was brought about by the factious attitude of some of the Corinthian brethren. It is fair to assume from the remark made by Jude that the love feast itself was harmless, since he offers no criticism of it; but when it was brought into the worship of the church and abused as it was in Corinth, it was summarily condemned by apostolic authority. It should also be observed that the abuse of the love feast was not where the trouble started: it began in their unbrotherly attitude toward others in the church. When a condition like that develops, almost anything is likely to happen.

Some brethren, even today, have

mistakenly thought that the passage now under consideration condemns the eating of food in the church building; but this is due to the fact that they fail to make a distinction between the church and the building in which the church meets. If it were wrong to eat and drink in a church building, then the room in a private home in which congregations frequently assemble for worship could not be used as a dining room, or even as a place where light refreshments might be served. Paul did not condemn the Corinthian Christians merely for eating in the place of assembly, but rather for their unchristian conduct in eating and drinking to excess, and ignoring their needy brethren, while assembling for worship. It is never right to engage in such practices, and certainly not when the church has met for worship. Any extra activities and unchristian attitudes which are brought into the assembly of the saints who have met for worship, are always out of place and contrary to the will of God.

It is not wrong to serve food and drink "on the ground," that is, on the premises of the church, either before or after the hour of worship; and it would not be out of place to partake of the food and drink inside the building, if conditions made it more desirable, provided the spirit of Christ prevailed. But when those who have plenty bring their food and drink to the place of the public assembly, and partake of it privately in a public place; and not only that, but eat and drink to excess to the embarrassment of those who do not have a sufficiency, the spirit which prompts such conduct is so foreign to the will of God, as to make it impossible to eat the Lord's supper under such conditions. They can, of course, go through the form of eating the supper; but the language of Paul makes it certain that the Lord does not recognize it as being in obedience to him. (Cf. Matt. 7: 21-23.)

When Paul asked the Corinthian offenders if they didn't have houses, that is, private homes, in which to eat and drink, he did not mean to imply that it was proper to eat and drink to excess there, and to ignore the poorer brethren. But what he is apparently saying is that it is

much better for them to do their eating and drinking at home, than to manifest such a spirit in the place of public worship. Such conduct pours scorn on the church and humiliates the humbler and poorer brethren; and the same principle is also frequently seen today. There are brethren with plenty who apparently have little or no concern for the needs of others, or for the glory of the church; and they frequently do nothing to conceal their attitude regarding those who have a right to expect better things of them. Such brethren seemingly fail to see the real reason which prevented the Corinthian Christians from being able to eat the Lord's supper, namely, their own unchristian attitude, which was manifested in their factious spirit and ungodly conduct. (Cf. John 4: 24.) People must have spiritual communion with God before they can worship him in spirit; and they must be guided by the truth before they can worship him in truth. Brethren in a "fuss" can't worship acceptably.

The Origin and Purpose of the
Lord's Supper
(1 Cor. 11; 23-26)

For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me. In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood; this do, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

Paul's evident purpose in setting forth the divine origin of the Lord's supper was to condemn the scandalous behaviour of the Corinthian brethren, and to urge them to get themselves right with God. Professed Christians who have any love for the Lord and appreciation for that which he did in making their salvation possible, and any respect for themselves, will not be guilty of that which humiliates their brethren, disgraces the church in the eyes of others and shows contempt for the Lord, when they assemble themselves for worship; and those who are guilty of such conduct should be made to see, if possible, that they cannot eat the

Lord's supper under such circumstances. This is what is meant by improper observance of the Lord's supper. It is often the case that brethren criticize denominational people for their unscriptural attitude toward the Lord's supper, and probably feel that such is the extent of improper observance of the communion service. Such practices, of course, are not acceptable to the Lord; but that is not the purpose of this lesson. The Corinthians were the Lord's people, whose own conduct made it impossible for them to eat the supper of the Lord; and when Christians today come to the place of worship with the wrong attitude toward the Lord and their brethren, they, too, are in a position which will prevent their pleasing the Master whom they profess to serve. (Cf. Matt. 5: 23-26.)

Paul's position as the apostle to the Gentiles often led to his being criticized by his brethren, and made it necessary for him to assert the independence of his relationship to Christ. He wrote to the Galatians and said, "For I make known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. 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: 11, 12.) With these facts in mind, it appears certain that Paul was claiming direct revelation from Christ regarding the Lord's supper; all of which would make his words to the Corinthians more impressive. The Expositor's Greek Testament notes that the allusion to "the night in which he was betrayed" (literally, *while the betrayal went on*), is no mere note of time. It shows the fidelity of Jesus in the covenant (verse 25) thus made with his people, and enhances the holy pathos of the recollection—behind the Saviour lurks the traitor. It also incidentally shows how detailed and matter-of-fact the account is which Paul gave his converts in Corinth.

In saying, "this do, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me," Paul did not mean to imply that there was no definite time for the observance of the Lord's supper. The apostle's purpose in discussing the question did not involve the time element. The Corinthians knew *when*

they were expected to meet for that purpose; but they needed some definite teaching regarding the *manner* in which they should celebrate the sacred feast.

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come. This is one of the four principal reasons which the New Testament assigns for observing the Lord's supper. (1) We learn from verses 24, 25 that it is a *commemorative institution*. (2) The verse now under consideration (verse 26) teaches us that it is also *declarative*. (3) A third purpose is set forth in 1 Cor. 10: 16, 17, namely, *communion*. (4) The fourth purpose for which the supper was instituted is implied in John 6: 53-55. This passage, to be sure, does not refer directly to the Lord's supper, but any one who does that which Jesus teaches in it will partake of the quality of his life—his flesh and blood; and that will furnish *spiritual nourishment*.

The Consequences of Improper Observance of the Supper

(1 Cor. 11: 27-34)

Wherefore whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup. For he that eateth and drinketh, eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself, if he discern not the body.

There have been some brethren who have felt, when they read this passage, that they were not worthy to eat the supper of the Lord; and they have, because of this viewpoint, failed to do that which is directly commanded. The reference is not to an "unworthy person," but to an "unworthy manner." And in order for any one to make sure that he is obeying the Lord in this respect, he is exhorted to "prove himself," that is, put himself to the test (cf. 2 Cor. 13: 5; 1 Thess. 5: 21; 1 John 4: 1; Eph. 5: 10, where the same original word is found). Thus, instead of coming to the table as the Corinthians did (1 Cor. 11: 17-22), or like many brethren often do today who do not possess the proper attitude toward the Lord and their brethren, Christians must "discern" the body,

or, which is the same thing, judge correctly, that is, discriminate (see marginal note), and thereby determine that what he is doing differs from all other eating and drinking, in that it is done unto the Lord. Any one who eats the Lord's supper without this due consideration is to be guilty of a gross sin, which will be duly punished if the proper steps are not taken for its forgiveness. People must come to the table of the Lord, feeling that they are in his presence (cf. Matt. 18: 20), and with the spirit of humility and reverence.

The term "cup" in verse 27 does not refer to the container, but rather to the contents. This is made certain by the language of the verse. "Wherefore whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body [bread] and the blood [cup] of the Lord." Thus, in the comparison, breads the body, cup—the blood. When Paul exhorts to "drink the cup" (verse 26), he is not telling Christians to drink the cup, but its contents.

For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few asleap. But if we discerned ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

Alford calls verse 30 the experimental proof of the assertion that he eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself, if he discern not the body. Bible students, generally speaking, hold that the reference was to physical diseases and death; but that seems hardly probable, since, as Lipscomb notes, spiritual neglect must bring spiritual penalties. The failure of the Corinthian Christians to restrain themselves and condition themselves spiritually, had apparently resulted in their spiritual indifference and neglect, and had caused some of them to die spiritually. This seems to be the correct view, especially after reading verse 31, which says that if we correctly discerned ourselves, that is, try or test ourselves, we will not be condemned of the Lord. Weymouth renders verse 31 in these words: "If, however, we understood ourselves aright, we should not be judged," while Goodspeed has it, "But if we recognized our own condition, we

would not incur this judgment." But, continues Paul, when we are judged, that is, condemned, we are chastened, that is, disciplined or punished of the Lord so that we may not be condemned with the world. (Cf. Heb. 12: 5-13.) Christian people should always count it a great blessing when they are corrected with reference to their conduct which is not pleasing to the Lord.

Wherefore my brethren, when ye come together to eat, wait one for another. If any man is hungry, let him eat at home; that your coming together be not unto judgment. And the rest will I set in order whensoever I come.

While most Bible students regard the coming together to eat (verse 33) as referring to eating the Lord's supper, and that may be true; but it is only fair to say that that is not the view of all respected commentators. If the reference is to the Lord's supper, then the waiting one for another does not mean that if some of the brethren are late, the ones who are there should postpone the meeting until the late comers arrive; for in that case they might have to wait all the week! But when we consider the fact that the disturbance in the church in Corinth was not over the Lord's supper, as such; but rather over what was happening at the love feast which made it impossible to eat the Lord's supper, since they were wholly unfit to assemble around the Lord's table, it appears quite probable that Paul was referring to the love feast in the verse now under consideration.

It has already been pointed out that, judging from Jude's reference

to the love feast, there does not seem to be any condemnation of the practice itself, since the feast was intended to promote Christian benevolence and fellowship; but when it was perverted as it was in Corinth, the result was that the worship of the church which followed, including the eating of the Lord's supper, was rendered null and void. No group can worship God acceptably under such conditions; and this is what we need to learn. An analysis of the whole context now before us is something like this: (1) the shameful disorders of the Corinthian brethren at the love feast, prior to the time for eating the Lord's supper, verses 17-22; (2) the solemn origin, nature, and purpose of the Lord's supper make it impossible for such abusers of Christian fellowship to partake of it acceptably in the Lord's sight, verses 23-32; (3) therefore, when assembling for the love feast, don't act as you did in verse 21, but wait one for another, so that all may enjoy the fellowship together and will be spiritually fit to eat the Lord's supper. Alford notes that the love feasts were not meals to satisfy bodily appetites, but for a higher and holier purpose: let the hungry take off the edge of his hunger at home. (See verse 22; cf. Bloomfield, Meyer, et al, *in loco*.) If the Corinthian brethren would get themselves in a better spiritual condition, then their meetings would not be subject to condemnation; and the apostle would give them further instruction when he next visited them. (Verses 33, 34.) That which destroys fellowship prevents an acceptable eating of the Lord's supper.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

When and under what circumstances did Christ institute the Lord's supper?
In what way does he want his people to remember his death?
What has always been the disposition of people who were trying to honor the
What was the "love feast" and why was it observed by the early Christians?
In what way was it related to the Lord's supper?
What occasion did it furnish Paul in the lesson now before us?

Some Disqualifying Disorders in Connection with the Worship

What did Paul mean by "praising" the Corinthians, as set forth in the chapter from which our lesson text is taken?
For what did he say that he could not praise them?
What was the attitude of the brethren whom Paul rebuked?
In what way did they demonstrate their attitude?
What do we learn from this lesson regarding eating and drinking for physical refreshment in church buildings?
Why couldn't the Corinthian brethren eat the Lord's supper under the conditions which Paul mentioned?
In what ways may the principles of this lesson be applied to our day?

What is necessary in order for Christians to worship God in spirit and in truth?

The Origin and Purpose of the Lord's Supper

What was Paul's purpose in setting forth the origin and purpose of the Lord's supper?

What lesson should it have for us? What is meant by improper observance of the Lord's supper?

Show how people today may be guilty of such misconduct.

Why did Paul mention the fact that he received the revelation regarding the Lord's supper directly from the Lord?

Where did Paul place the emphasis in his remarks regarding the observance of the supper?

What are the principal reasons which the New Testament assigns for eating the Lord's supper?

The Consequences of Improper Observance of the Supper

In what way have some brethren misunderstood the instruction regarding the manner of eating?

What does Paul instruct all participants of the supper to do before eating?

What is meant by discerning the Lord's body?

What is meant by drinking the "cup"?

In what had the failure to manifest the proper spirit resulted among the Corinthians?

What should they have done, in order to escape the Lord's punishment?

What is the Christian attitude toward discipline?

To what coming together did Paul probably refer in verse 33?

What is meant by "waiting" one for another?

What further teaching did Paul plan to give the Corinthian brethren?

Lesson X—September 8, 1963

THE BODY OF CHRIST

Lesson Text

1 Cor. 12: 12-27

12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ.

13 For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free, and were all made to drink of one Spirit.

14 For the body is not one member, but many.

15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; it is not therefore not of the body.

16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; it is not therefore not of the body.

17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

18 But now hath God set the members each one of them in the body, even as it pleased him.

19 And if they were all one member, where were the body?

20 But now they are many members, but one body.

21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

22 Nay, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary:

23 And those parts of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness;

24 Whereas our comely parts have no need: but God tempered the body together, giving more abundant honor to that part which lacked;

25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

26 And whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it; or one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof.

Golden Text. — "And he is the head of the body, the church" (Col. 1: 18.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Cor. 12: 1-11.

Daily Bible Readings

- September 2. M.....Body, the Church (Eph. 1: 19-23)
- September 3. T.....Christ, Savior of the Body (Eph. 5: 22, 23)
- September 4. W.....Christ and the Church (Eph. 5: 25-33)

September 5. T.....Christians, Members of the Body (1 Cor. 12: 12-27)
 September 6. F.....Christ Head of the Body (Col. 1: 18-23)
 September 7. S....."For His Body's Sake" (Col. 1: 24-29)
 September 8. S.....Christ's Church (Matt. 16: 13-20)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—First Corinthians was written from Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

Paul's immediate aim in that portion of his letter from which our lesson text for today is taken was to set forth the organic unity of the church; and he accomplished his purpose, and illustrated his point, by comparing the church to the human body. If any one will keep in mind the fact that the human body, though having many parts, is still only one body, and that it cannot function properly without the normal use of its several parts, it will be much easier for him to understand the nature and purpose of the church. No thoughtful person would contend that the various members of the human body are "separate bodies," all of which are integral parts of the whole; but that is the ridiculous position in which one places himself, when he tries to justify the idea that all the denominational bodies of Christendom are in reality parts of the church of the Lord.

When the New Testament speaks of the church as the body of Christ, the reference is not to the literal and personal body of the Lord, that is, his fleshly body; but rather to the "body of people" over which he rules as head. After speaking of the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, Paul says, "And he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. 1: 22, 23.) The literal meaning of the original word for "church" is the *called out*; and since the people who compose the church are those who were called out of the world by the gospel which Christ authorized to be preached (Mark 16: 15, 16; 2 Thess. 2: 13, 14), it follows that that group of people and the body of Christ are one and the same. (Cf. Acts 2: 41, 47.)

In speaking of the church as the body of Christ in Eph. 1: 22, 23, Paul says that this *body* is "the fulness of him that filleth all in all," that is,

the body (church) is in some sense the "fulness" of Christ. Bible students are not agreed as to whether the original term for "fulness" (*plērōma*) should be regarded as being active or passive. One of the meanings of *plērōma*, according to Arndt-Gingrich, is "that which makes something full or complete, supplement, complement," and they recognize the possibility that in its figurative sense the church, as the body, is the *complement* of Christ, who is the head. They also call attention to the fact that this was also the view of Chrysostom. Weymouth renders the passage under consideration in these words, "God put all things under his feet, and has appointed him universal and supreme head of the church, which is his body, the completeness of him who everywhere fills the universe with himself."

If Weymouth's translation is correct, and the context appears to require it, then the idea is that the church complements or makes complete him who fills the entire universe. This is perhaps the greatest tribute which could be paid to the church—something which is so essential to Christ, that he could not be complete without it! While Arndt-Gingrich, The Expositor's Greek Testament, and other scholars, lean toward the idea that the term for "fulness" should be regarded as passive, The Expositor's Greek Testament does concede that if the term is to be regarded as active the "idea is that the church is that which makes Christ himself complete. A head, however perfect in itself, if it is without members, is something incomplete. So Christ, who is the head of the church, requires the church to make his completeness, just as the church which is his body requires him as the head to make a complete and living thing."

We know, of course, from other passages of scripture that the Divine

Presence fills the church (cf. Eph. 3: 16-19), but that does not mean that the church also is not the complement of Christ. Any one who is familiar with the teaching of the New Testament knows that Christ does not do his work of redemption and sanctification personally, but rather through the church. (Cf. Eph. 3: 20, 21.) It is the purpose of the church to reveal Christ to the world, and to continue his work which he began while he was himself on the earth. It is, indeed, a truth worthy of great emphasis that the gospel and the work of the church are but extensions of the personal ministry of Christ; for it is through these channels that the glorious work continues. (Cf. 1 Tim. 3: 14, 15.)

To speak of the church as the body

of Christ, is a wonderful figure; and the practical meaning is that what the members of his body were to him during the days of his flesh, so the church is to him now. How could Christ have shown men what God is like while he was among them, except by means of his body and its various members and faculties? And how could he have gone about doing good and proving his love to the uttermost, without his body? It is a great and solemn thought that now, after the Lord has returned to his Father, the church, as his body, has entrusted to it a work which, apart from it, he lacks the means to accomplish. The church is his co-worker, and he has honored her by sharing with her the task of achieving the work which he came to do.

The Golden Text

"And he is the head of the body, the church" Attention has often been called to the fact that Colossians and Ephesians were not only written at the same time, but on the same general theme. In Colossians Paul placed the emphasis upon the preeminence of Christ as the head of all things, especially the church; and in doing so he set forth the grandest and fullest conception of the person and work of Christ which is known to us. But in Ephesians he shifted the emphasis

somewhat and centered the attention of his readers upon the place and purpose of the church, as the body of Christ, as the medium through which the eternal purpose of God is made known (Eph. 3: 10), and through which he is to receive glory from his redeemed creatures (Eph. 3: 20, 21). If all the members of the body of Christ would only keep continuously in mind the fact that Christ is the head of the church, and would abide by that truth, what a difference it would make!

The Text Explained

The Organic Unity of the Body

(1 Cor. 12: 12, 13)

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit.

In spite of the organic union of the Roman Empire of Paul's day, there were many divisions among the people, such as those which existed between Jews and Gentile, master and slave, rich and poor, the learned and the unlearned. The attitudes which grew out of these relationships produced barriers among the people which were almost insurmountable. The entire world was seamed and scarred by divisions which separated man from man.

It was into this kind of a situation that the gospel came with its appeal to men. This message was not limited to a favored few, but was for all men, regardless of their station or relationship in life. (Cf. John 12: 32; Mark 16: 15, 16.) But the gospel did not call men to continue in their divisions; they were to be one in Christ (Col. 3: 9b-15). All of their former enmities and unholy attitudes toward one another were to be left behind when they came into Christ. (Cf. Isa. 11: 6-9.) It was to people with this kind of a background that Paul addressed the exhortation of the text now under consideration; and when we consider the fact that the unity which is here alluded to is the unity which the Spirit himself brought about (Eph. 4: 3), the importance of the lesson will at once become apparent.

The first thing which Paul does

in the passage now before us is to show the unity of the human body, with its various members; and then affirms that just so it is with Christ and the members of his body. This is the kind of unity which the Spirit brings about when people obey the gospel; and they are under direct compulsion to make every effort to maintain it. (Read again Eph. 4: 3.) The apostle affirms in verse 13 of the text now before us that it was through the agency of the Spirit that we were "all baptized into one body," regardless of our former relationships in life. This baptism, of course, is water baptism, the baptism of the great commission; and it is administered by the Lord's people as the Spirit directs. All classes therefore reach a spiritual equality before God in this body, which is the church. (Cf. Gal. 3: 26-28.)

The unity is further confirmed and sealed by the fact that those baptized into Christ are "all made to drink of one Spirit." The original word from which we have "drink" is *potizō*, and its meaning is to give or furnish something to drink. It came to mean to water, to irrigate; and it is the word which Paul used when he said, "I planted, Apollos watered." (1 Cor. 3: 6-8.) In its metaphorical sense, as used in the passage now before us, the word means, according to Thayer, Amdt-Gingrich, et al, to imbue, saturate. (Cf. Isa. 29: 10.) Moffatt has, "we have all been imbued with one Spirit;" Goodspeed, "and we have all been saturated with one Spirit;" The Expositor's Greek Testament, "we were drenched" in one Spirit. The reference, of course, is to the reception of the Holy Spirit when one is baptized into Christ. "To drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12: 13) and "ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2: 38) refer to one and the same thing, namely, the impartation of the Holy Spirit to obedient believers. (Cf. John 7: 37-39; Acts 5: 32.)

The Church Is a Body with Many Members

(1 Cor. 12: 14-20)

For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; it is not therefore not of the body. And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am

not of the body, it is not therefore not of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members each one of them in the body, even as it pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now they are many members, but one body.

Verse 14—"For the body is not one member, but many"—may well be called the thesis of this section of our lesson text; and the verses which follow are meant to illustrate it. And just as the physical body is one, with many members; so is the church. We must always expect a variety of members in the church, and we must always remember that no child of God, however insignificant he may be in the sight of his brethren, is useless in the service of the Lord. This is a lesson that even many of the leaders in the various congregations have apparently failed to learn, to say nothing of the average members who go to make up those groups. When Jesus spoke the parable of the talents, he made it very plain that every individual possesses something which makes him responsible in the sight of God. No member of the church therefore should regard himself as being of no account in the service of the Lord; and that is the way every other member should feel toward the entire brotherhood.

It is often the case in the average congregation that some "weaker" members are wont to belittle themselves in the presence of their more gifted brethren; and verses 15 and 16 show the folly of such an attitude. The first section of the lesson text shows that all who are in the church, regardless of their station, are organically united with the entire body. We were "all baptized into one body. . . . and were all made to drink of one Spirit." There is therefore no one who is a member of the body, who is without responsibility toward the others and toward the Lord. Just because someone feels that his inferior ability excludes him from a vital place in the body, that feeling does not make it so, any more than the feeling that one is a child of God makes a man who has never obeyed the gospel a Christian. Feelings, regardless of by whom they may be

manifested, are never the standard of acceptance in God's sight. His word, and his word only, will determine whether or not one is pleasing to the Lord. (Cf. John 12: 48-50.)

It should be observed that Paul, in discussing the passage now under consideration, associates the members of "action" (the foot and the hand), and the members of "sensation" (the ear and the eye), and then represents each as complaining against the other of his own class; and this was doubtless true because men are more prone to be envious and to disparage themselves with reference to those who have superior gifts which are similar to their own. It is the foot therefore, and not the eye or the ear, which envies the hand. Every member of the body of Christ therefore should recognize himself for what he is, and should do his best to be pleasing to the Lord, regardless of the ability and performance of every other member. This, to be sure, is easier said than done, but it is the truth, nevertheless. No one has the God-given right to jeopardize his own chance of heaven, just because his brethren have more ability and better opportunities than he has.

Not only is every member vital to the body; there is also necessity for diversity, if the body is to be an instrument for the accomplishment of the greatest possible good. If one will only stop and think of the many, many things which are accomplished, both separately and in conjunction with each other, by the various members of the human body, he then can begin to see the value of having people with so many different endowments in the church. The particular situation which brought about Paul's discussion of this phase of the subject now before us, or so it appears, was the attitude of some of the Corinthian brethren with certain spiritual gifts who looked down upon and belittled others who did not possess them. But Paul wanted them to know that the gifts and endowments of all the members are essential. And furthermore, God wants all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9), and no member, however little his endowments may be, should ever be regarded as unimportant to the cause of Christ. (Cf. Matt. 16: 26.)

Thus, after showing in verses 17-19

the great need for diversity in the human body, and by comparison the body of Christ, Paul concludes this portion of this section of our lesson text by saying, "But now they are many members, but one body." This is the apostle's way of affirming that the church is a unit. There are many members in it, but they all together make up but a single body. It seems difficult for some people to get the idea that the term "church" is used in the New Testament in this manner, seeing they continually talk about the various "branches of the church;" but if they could ever be brought to see that the church and the body of Christ are one and the same, it would not be difficult for them to understand the teaching of the New Testament regarding the oneness of the church. No man, in his right mind, will contend that Jesus has more than one body.

The Mutual Dependence of the Body's Members and Its Purpose (1 Cor. 12: 21-27)

And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary: and those parts of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness; whereas our comely parts have no need: but God tempered the body, giving more abundant honor to that part which lacked; that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it; or one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

The purpose of the passage just quoted is to set forth the interdependence of all the members of the body. It has already been pointed out that some were envious of others in the church who had greater gifts than they, and others who possessed them looked down upon those who did not have them; but here we have a different relationship and attitude. Instead of members of *action* and *sensation* being grouped together, the eye and the head versus the hand and the feet, with the implication that

the members of the church who regard themselves as possessing superior gifts manifesting an attitude toward their humbler brethren which, for all practical purposes, amounted to a desire for their exclusion. Although people in the church today do not possess miraculous gifts as some of the Corinthian brethren did, it is, nevertheless, a fact in many places, that those who have the greatest ability see little need for the contribution to the work which the lesser gifted brethren are able to make. This is true, to an alarming degree, among preachers, song leaders, and specialists among teachers.

There is complete harmony among the members of the human body, along with due consideration for the welfare of each; and that is the manner in which the Lord's intends for the members of the church, the body of Christ, to feel and act toward each other. Some members require more care and attention than others do; and those with the greatest lack of need should be both willing and happy to do what they can to improve the standing of those who are in need. God has tempered the human body together, "giving more

abundant honor to that part which lacked; that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another." This, according to Paul, is God's will for the members of the spiritual body; and when that is done, it will not be difficult for those who compose it to "rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them that weep." (Rom. 12: 15.)

Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof. This is Paul's application of the truths which he has been discussing. The marginal reading has, instead of *severally members thereof*, "members each in his part." Goodspeed's translation reads as follows: "Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it." The New English Bible renders the verse in these words: "Now you are Christ's body, and each of you a limb or organ of it." (Cf. John 15: 1-6.) No thoughtful and conscientious Christian can study the chapter from which our lesson text for today is taken, and remain indifferent toward the development and progress of each and every member of the church, and especially those with whom he is associated.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What was Paul's principal aim in writing the words of our lesson text for today?

What lesson should we learn from them regarding the nature of the church?

What is the body of Christ which is called the church?

Discuss the relationship which the church sustains to Christ?

The Golden Text

What is involved in saying that Christ is the head of the church?

Why have so many professed Christians been so little impressed with this idea?

The Organic Unity of the Body

What was the general condition of the world at the time of Christianity's entrance into it?

How extensive is the gospel's call? Give reasons for your answer.

What was and is the purpose of bringing men to Christ?

Why did Paul go into such details to describe the unity of the human body?

What is the divine process for making all men one in Christ?

How in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body?

What does it mean to drink of one Spirit?

The Church Is a Body with Many

Members

How is verse 14 related to the following verses in this section of our lesson text?

What is the significance of a "variety of church membership"?

Why have so many church leaders failed to learn this lesson?

What is wrong with weaker members of the church "belittling" themselves?

What will always determine a man's standing before God? Give reasons for your answer.

Instead of comparing himself with other members of the church, what should every individual member do?

Why is "diversity" essential to the progress of the church?

Why did the Corinthian brethren need a lesson like this?

Why do Christians today need it?

What are the basic reasons for regarding every child of God as being essential to the life and work of the church?

Why do so many religious people have difficulty in seeing that the church of the New Testament is a unit?

The Mutual Dependence of the Body's

Members and Its Purpose

How did Paul go about emphasizing the idea of the church's interdependence?

Why is it that the more gifted members so often look with little favor upon the weaker brethren?

In what way does Paul illustrate the harmony which should exist among brethren?

Discuss Paul's application of the truths he set forth in the text for today.

Lesson XI—September 15, 1963

THE SUPREMACY OF LOVE

Lesson Text

1 Cor. 13: 1-13

1 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal.

2 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.

3 And if I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing.

4 Love suffereth long, *and* is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil;

6 Rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth;

7 Beareth all things, believeth all

things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

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.

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

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

11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child: now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things.

12 For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know fully even as also I was fully known.

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

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three: and the greatest of these is love.*” (1 Cor. 13: 13.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 John 3: 10-24.

Daily Bible Readings

September 9. M.....	.....Love One’s Neighbor (Luke 10: 25-37)
September 10. T.....	.....Love Fulfills the Law (Rom. 13: 8-10)
September 11. W.....	.....Love the Brotherhood (1 Pet. 2: 17)
September 12. T.....	.....John Loved Gaius (3 John 1)
September 13. F.....	.....Christ Loved (John 21: 20-23)
September 14. S.....	.....Love More Than Brethren (Matt. 5: 43-48)
September 15. S.....	.....Hate Brother—Murderer (1 John 3: 21-24)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—First Corinthians was written from Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

As Paul closed the portion of his epistle to the Corinthians which we call the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians, he wrote, “And moreover a most excellent way show I unto you.” This *most excellent way* is the way of love, and the entire lesson text for today is devoted to it. The church in Corinth was having some trouble over the question of spiritual gifts, as may be seen by reading chapters 12 and 14; and the purpose of the chapter now before us was and is to show the Lord’s people a

way to solve their problems, and to be happy on their way to heaven. We usually think of John as the apostle of love; but when we consider the writings of John and Paul together, it is easy to see that some of the greatest thoughts on the subject of love which are on record were written by the apostle to the Gentiles.

In commenting on this great hymn of love, The Speaker’s Bible notes that the sudden burst into this rapturous portion of scripture is not unlike the manner of Paul; for in set-

ting even small matters of disputed issues which belong to earth and time, he never loses the guidance and inspiration of the over-arching heavens. If men are troubled about subsidiary things, he lifts them into a loftier plane of vision, and bids them share the inspirations of Diviner ideas and a richer life. As already indicated, Paul had in chapter 12 been discussing the value of certain spiritual gifts with all the precision of an accountant; for, as may be clearly seen from his writings, the apostle had a genius for arrangement and administration. His higher vision of things pertaining to the kingdom of Christ never permitted him to be impractical with reference to the direction of the church or personal matters. And of all the unruly and unpromising things with which even an apostle had to deal, surely there was nothing more so than the pride which some of the Corinthian brethren manifested in connection with the gift of tongues. Too much in the way of tongues often means too little in the way of love; and what was true in the Corinthian church in Paul's day, is still true today, even with tongues which are not inspired.

It is a noticeable fact that Paul

does not give a formal definition of love. There are some things, even among the simplest and most elemental, which are not definable; and there are times when to attempt a definition is, for all practical purposes, to destroy. No one questions the beauty of the sunset, but who can define it? The artist can paint it, and the chemist can describe its colors; but no one can define its beauty. And so, there are no analyses, no abstractions, and no speculations in this great word about love. We are not even asked to consider such things, but rather to walk with love, a kindly, kingly presence, and to hear how love says that which must be said day by day, and to see how love does that which must be done, if we are to please God. It is here that we are able to see how love endures that which must be endured, and to observe how love stoops beneath the burdens of others, in order to lend a helping hand, while all the time maintaining that silence which is more full and availing than speech. Surely this is the best way to learn love's true meaning; for to find out what anything is we simply watch that which it does.

The Golden Text

This portion of our study is found in the lesson text, and it will be considered in its proper place.

The Text Explained

The Way to Christian Eminence

(1 Cor. 13: 1-3)

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. 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. And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing.

Any passage of scripture can best be understood in the light of its context. It has already been pointed out that when Paul wrote the chapter which serves as our lesson text for today, he was endeavoring to correct some mistaken views regarding spiritual gifts which were prevalent in the Corinthian church. This was especially true with reference to the

ability to speak with tongues. Paul wanted his brethren in Corinth to have whatever gifts were possible for them, and so he said, "But desire earnestly the greater gifts. And moreover a most excellent way show I unto you." (1 Cor. 12: 31.) It is not wrong for any child of God to desire to excel in any worthy endeavor, provided his is actuated by an acceptable motive. This is Paul's reason for saying that which is contained in the text now before us.

Paul's "most excellent way" may very properly be described as the royal road to heaven, and it is certain that no responsible person will get there who does not follow this route. This way is literally a way in the superlative degree—a way which has in perfection all the qualities which should characterize a way. It is a way which is open to every one, an unobstructed way which leads

directly to the goal of Christian greatness. It is the way of love which Paul describes in the words of our lesson text for today. It is also a way which involves personal responsibility; for only those who choose to do so can walk therein. In the words of John Oxenham,

To every man there openeth
A Way, and Ways, and a Way.
And the High Soul climbs the High

Way,
And the Low Soul gropes the Low,
And in between, on the misty flats,
The rest drift to and fro.
But to every man there openeth
A High Way, and a Low.
And every man decideth
The way his soul shall go.

It is interesting to observe that in making the application of the way of love to the Corinthian brethren, Paul used himself, not them, as an illustration. He could have said, "If you;" but, as it is, he said, "If I." This was in keeping with the principle of love which he is discussing. The three classes of gifts were (1) *emotional*, (2) *intellectual*, and (3) *practical* (see verses 1, 2, and 3); and they involved the *heart*, the *mind*, and the *will*. Therefore, if a person is able to demonstrate the great display of linguistic ability which is possible to both men and angels, but does not have love as the ruling principle in his heart, he is no more than sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. The power behind one's tongue is not determined by the extent of his vocabulary, but by the quality of his heart.

One may be an intellectual genius, but if his mind is void of love, he is nothing in God's sight. If the intellectual Christian does not have sufficient love to cause him to serve the ignorant; if he does not have enough love to check his intellect when he is tempted to despise others, or to use his power to establish a selfish ascendancy over them; in short, if his intellect is not motivated by love, then he is nothing. And too, it makes no difference how much one is willing to do for others, or for some cause, if he is not actuated by the principle of love, it will profit him nothing. Any one therefore who is pleasing to God must see to it that his emotions, intellect, and will must be kept in balance; and the only thing which can accomplish that is

the love which Paul describes in the chapter now before us. This leads us to consider

The Qualities of Christian Love

(1 Cor 13: 4-7)

Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

The verses which make up the first section of the lesson text, in which Paul comes near to exhausting the vocabulary of language in setting forth the excellence of love, we learn that the loftiest human faculties of man are frustrate without love; and that it is by its aid alone that they are brought to their proper perfection and just use. Love, then, is the one thing which all Christians need; and it is of vital importance to each one of us that we examine ourselves, and see whether or not we really possess this supreme and indispensable grace. This can best be done by turning the searchlight of this passage on our lives and characters, and learning whether or not they bear the "marks" of love. Paul's answer to those men who challenged and disputed his standing with the Lord was this, "Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus." (Gal. 6: 17.) The *marks* which he doubtless had primarily in mind were the scars which he bore as a result of his persecution for Christ's sake; and it is not out of place to speak of the fifteen characteristics which Paul names in the verses now before us as the "marks" of love, and the signs of its presence. We may also speak of them as the behavior of love; and it is only when our lives and character conform to this way of life and bear these marks that we can truthfully say that we have love.

The fifteen characteristics of love which are set forth in verses 4-7 are Paul's practical definition of love; and in the first two he tells us how love behaves in the face of injuries and wrongs. It does not change to wrath and bitterness, but continues in kind-

ness while suffering. "Love suffereth long, and is kind." (Cf. 1 Pet. 2: 21-24; Rom. 12: 17-21.) Love does not envy the good fortunes of others. Benjamin Franklin, the philosopher, said, "Whoever feels pain in hearing a good character of his neighbor, will feel a pleasure in the reverse. And those who despair to rise in distinction by their virtues, are happy if others can be depressed to a level with themselves." The true Christian therefore is not sad at the good fortune of another, but can rejoice with them that rejoice; and weep with them that weep (Rom. 12: 15).

To "vaunt" oneself and to be "puffed up" are closely related, the one (puffed up) being an inward condition, while the other (vaunt) is an outward manifestation. People vaunt themselves, that is, parade their possessions and attainments before others, especially those who are less fortunate in their estimation, because they are puffed up or inflated with pride and arrogance. The aim of such people is to demonstrate their own greatness and prove their superiority to their neighbors. To behave oneself unseemly is to betray a lack of sympathy for others by unbecoming and offensive conduct. Such people apparently have never learned that manners are an index to character. That is what Sir Walter Scott meant when, in one of his stories, he had a man strike another one on the head with a walking cane, and then told him to go home and mend his head, since his manners were beyond improvement.

The unselfishness of love is seen in the fact that it does not seek its own. Instead, Christian love lives not to get, but to give. Those who are motivated by this kind of a spirit are interested in the welfare of others. (Rom. 15: 1-3.) Love is not easily upset because of the unbecoming and sinful conduct of others. The story is told of a man who accompanied his Quaker friend to the newsstand to purchase a paper. After the purchase was made, the Quaker thanked the newsman politely, but the latter did not even acknowledge the courtesy. In commenting on the action of the newsman, the Quaker's friend said, "He's a sullen fellow, isn't he?" whereupon the Quaker said, "Oh, he's that way every night." "Then," replied his

friend, "why do you continue to be so polite to him;" and he received this answer: "Why should I let *him* decide how *I* am going to act?" Thus, instead of "reacting" toward the rude newsman, the Quaker simply went on *acting* in keeping with his character. His sense of inner balance, which is lacking in so many of us, was such as to enable him to maintain the proper relation between who he was and what he stood for, and how he should behave toward others. And instead of love's not being provoked, it does not take account of evil, that is, hold grudges against those who have mistreated it.

Love does not rejoice when sin is committed, and is not glad to see the downfall of those who are overcome by it. It is never glad when others go wrong; instead, it rejoices with the truth. Love and truth are both personified, and are pictured as having the same attitudes, the same likes and dislikes. Neither of them can have pleasure in wickedness; and it is for that reason that love rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth *with* the truth. The four phases of the subject found in verse 7 may very properly be regarded as the *optimism of love*. In saying that love beareth all things, the idea seems to be that love is not afraid to face life, with all that life means; for it cannot be crushed beneath its burdens: it has vast powers of recovery. Love takes the kindest view of the deeds and circumstances of others; it endeavors to look upon the bright, rather than upon the dark side of things. And if it cannot see the best today, it will hope for it tomorrow. The endurance of love is not simply that dogged persistency which continues in spite of adversity; it is rather that quality of love which suffers and forgives—it cannot be overcome by evil.

The Greatest Thing in the World (1 Cor. 13: 8-13)

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. Supernatural gifts were essential during the early days of the church, but as it passed on toward maturity, those gifts were discarded, three of

which are mentioned in this verse, namely prophecies, tongues, and supernatural knowledge, mentioned along with supernatural faith in verse 2. The verse now under consideration says that such gifts would pass away, and Eph. 4: 11-16 tells when they would end. But love, on the other hand, will survive everything; it will hold its place, and never fall out.

For we know in part, and we prophecy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. It appears that Paul's purpose here was to contrast the imperfect state of the church—the period during which supernatural gifts were necessary for its instruction—with the perfect state, when such means would no longer be needed. The "perfect" which was to come is the *perfect source of information*, or, which is the same thing, the New Testament as we now have it. (Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17.) The information which was available to the church was the same during both the childhood and the adult periods; but the *source* of the information was not. During the miraculous age, teaching was partial in scope, and available only when inspired men were present to speak; but with the passing of that age, the truth which was needed for the present dispensation was reduced to writing, and became available to all who desire to read and study it—hence, a perfect or complete source of information.

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child: now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know fully even as also I was fully known.

These are but illustrations to enable the Corinthians, and all others who read this passage, to see the difference between the childhood and the manhood states of the church. Paul, speaking after the manner of men, simply placed himself on both sides of the question—I was a child, now I am a man. The divine knowledge which was essential to acceptable obedience was in "earthen vessels" (2 Cor. 4: 7) during the early state of the church, and the people

therefore did not have access to the *perfect or complete source* of information, except as inspired men spoke to them; but after the age of miracles passed away and the full revelation was reduced to writing, then that which existed in earthen vessels became available in book form—hence, the perfect source of information.

But now abideth faith, hope, love these three; and the greatest of these is love. This statement represents faith, hope, and love as being numerically distinct, yet we know from other parts of the New Testament that they are very closely associated, with an intimate mutual affinity and dependence. All three must remain together, while time continues, in order to their own perfection, as well as the total character into which they enter. God has joined them; and man must not attempt to put them asunder. Faith must fill the mind with hope, and work by love, if it is to show its genuineness as that living and operative faith which alone is approved by the New Testament. If hope does not rest on the foundation of faith, it is both visionary and unwarranted; and if it does not elevate the soul unto unfeigned love of both God and man, it is spurious and hypocritical. And love, if it is not the result of faith and sustained by hope, is merely a natural impulse, and essentially different from that "evangelical love" of which Paul spoke when he said, "But the end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned." (1 Tim. 1: 5.)

The essential permanence of these three graces—faith, hope, and love—is here asserted, but since love embraces and harmonizes the other two, love therefore is the greatest. And, too, when earth is no more and the eternal day has dawned, faith will be lost in sight, and hope, in fruition; but love will continue for ever; for "God is love." (1 John 4: 16.) "Love never faileth," that is, it will never weaken, but will continue to hold its place. In the words of Ruskin,

But Love an everlasting crown
receiveth;

For She is Hope, and Fortitude,
and Faith,

Who all things hopeth, beareth, and
believeth.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Under what circumstances did Paul write our lesson text for today?
What principle was he applying as he wrote about the way of love?
Why is love so important?
In what way does Paul define love?
Why can't love be formally defined?
What, then, is the best way to learn love's true meaning?

The Way to Christian Eminence

What is the best way to understand a passage of scripture?
Show that this is especially true in the case now before us.
What did Paul mean by "a most excellent way"?
To how many people is this way open?
Give reason for your answer.
What principle did Paul follow in explaining the more excellent way to the Corinthians?
What three classes of gifts and services did he set before them to illustrate the point?
What do they involve?
In what ways may they all be applied to us today?

The Qualities of Christian Love

What did Paul do which is calculated to make any Christian want to know what the qualities of love are?

What is the best way for one to know whether or not he possesses this love?
How many "marks" of love does Paul mention?
What is another way to describe these characteristics of love?
How does love behave in the face of injuries and wrongs?
What is the meaning of envy?
Under what circumstances does a person vaunt himself and become puffed up?
In what way are manners an index to character?
How does love demonstrate its unselfishness?
Illustrate the meaning of becoming provoked and taking account of evil.
What is the attitude of love toward unrighteousness?
How can love rejoice with the truth?
Discuss those things which show the optimism of love.

The Greatest Thing in the World

Why did Paul say that the supernatural gifts would pass away?
What did it mean to know in part?
What "perfect" did Paul say would come?
In what way did Paul illustrate the difference between the childhood and the manhood state of the church?
What relationship do faith, hope, and love have toward each other?
How does Paul indicate the essential permanence of these three graces?
Why is love greater than faith and hope?

Lesson XII—September 22, 1963

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Lesson Text

1 Cor. 14: 1-6, 18-20, 26-28, 37, 38

1 Follow after love; yet desire earnestly spiritual *gifts*, but rather that ye may prophesy.

2 For he that speaketh in a tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God; for no man understandeth; but in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

3 But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men edification, and exhortation, and consolation.

4 He that speaketh in a tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.

5 Now I would have you all speak with tongues, but rather that ye should prophesy: and greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.

6 But now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, unless I speak to you either by way of revelation, or

of knowledge, or of prophesying, or of teaching?

18 I thank God, I speak with tongues more than you all:

19 Howbeit in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

20 Brethren, be not children in mind: yet in malice be ye babes, but in mind be men.

26 What is it then, brethren? When ye come together, each one hath a psalm, hath a teaching, hath a revelation, hath a tongue, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

27 If any man speaketh in a tongue, let it be by two, or at the most three,

and *that* in turn; and let one interpret:

28 But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.

37 If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord.

38 But if any man is ignorant, let him be ignorant.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*But desire earnestly the greater gifts. And moreover a most excellent way show I unto you.*” (1 Cor. 12: 31.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Cor. 14: 7-19.

Daily Bible Readings

September 16. M.	Nature of Spiritual Gifts (1 Cor. 14: 7-17)
September 17. T.	Spiritual Gifts Temporary (1 Cor. 13: 1-13)
September 18. W.	Perfect Law of New Testament (James 1: 18-25)
September 19. T.	Gifts through Apostles' Hands (Acts 8: 14-17)
September 20. F.	Gifts at Ephesus (Acts 19: 1-6)
September 21. S.	Paul's Desire Regarding Rome (Rom. 1: 8-13)
September 22. S.	A More Perfect Way (1 Cor. 12: 27-31)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—First Corinthians was written from Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

It is fair to assume from 1 Cor. 7: 1 and 12: 1 that the Corinthian brethren had written to Paul regarding the question of spiritual gifts; and we know that all of chapters 12-14 are devoted to that subject. The apparent digression of chapter 13 is not a digression at all, but is an integral part of the total discussion. Paul's aim in the three chapters already referred to was to answer the question which had been submitted to him, particularly as it related to tongues and prophesying; and to answer it in such a way as to result in closer unity of the church in Corinth. The principal part of his answer, as would be expected, is to be found in chapter 14; but it will be helpful to us in our consideration of it to observe the manner in which he led the Corinthians to his reply. He first pointed out to them the office of the Holy Spirit as the distributor of God's gifts to his people (1 Cor. 12: 1-11); then the organic unity of the church (1 Cor. 12: 12-31); and finally the sovereignty of love in the Christian life (1 Cor. 13: 1-13).

As already indicated, Paul began his discussion of spiritual gifts by showing that they were distributed to the Lord's people by the Holy Spirit. The apostle's words are: "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are diversities of ministrations, and the

same Lord. And there are diversities of workings, but the same God, who worketh all things in all. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal. For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom; and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit: to another faith, in the same Spirit; and to another gifts of healings, in the one Spirit; 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: but all these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as he will." (1 Cor. 12: 4-11.)

Because of their heathen background (see 1 Cor. 12: 1-3), the Corinthian brethren apparently took a low and somewhat superstitious view of the Spirit's influence in the church; and as a result they had completely misunderstood the manner in which these spiritual gifts were given, as well as their purpose. And it is unfortunate, indeed, that some brethren today are still confused with reference to the question. Any one who reads the verses quoted above (verses 4-11) should have no difficulty in seeing that the gifts were distributed to the early Christians by the Spirit as a Divine Personality, and not because they possessed a "miraculous

measure" of the Spirit. Not only does the Bible not teach the "measure theory;" it specifically says that the Spirit is not given by measure. "For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for he giveth not the Spirit by measure." (John 3: 34.)

Miraculous manifestations of the Spirit were essential for the growth and development of the church during its early years; and since the Holy Spirit dwells in the Lord's people (Acts 2: 38, 39; 1 Cor. 3: 16, 17; 6: 19, 20; 2 Tim. 1: 14), it was his office to distribute these miraculous gifts, "even as he will," for the bene-

fit of the church. "But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal." (Verse 7.) Not every Christian, even in the age of miracles, possessed supernatural gifts, but only those who were chosen for particular services—"to profit withal," that is, *for advantage, or that which is profitable.* (See Arndt-Gingrich, Thayer, et al, *in loco.*) These early Christians possessed these "miraculous powers" because the Spirit had given them to them, and not as a result of the "amount" of the Spirit they possessed, that is, the "miraculous measure."

The Golden Text

"But desire earnestly the greater gifts. And moreover a most excellent way show I unto you." There does not seem to be anything in the Christian religion which prohibits a child of God from both desiring and seeking the best which is possible for him, in all fields of endeavor and attainment, providing, of course, he is actuated by love and motivated by spirit of Christ. Paul had just told the Corinthian brethren (1 Cor. 12: 28-30) that not all the members of the church can have the same gifts, since there are various types of work to be performed; and that every one must be content to do that to which he is assigned. But that does not mean that one in a lower station should not aspire to a greater work, while remaining faithful to the task in hand. (Cf. Stephen.) People are, generally speaking, usually assigned to the work for which they are especially prepared.

But it makes little difference in what station a person may find himself, he cannot be successful in the service of the Lord, nor pleasing to him, unless he faithfully walks in

the way of love. This way, as we saw in our last lesson, is fully described in the chapter following the words which serve as our golden text for today. The original word for "love" which Paul praises so highly is *agape*. Trench speaks of it as "a word born within the bosom of revealed religion;" and calls attention to the fact that "there is no trace of it in any heathen writer whatever;" and as The Speaker's Bible notes the word has, by reason of its birthright, meanings which give it a lofty and lonely place amid all other attempts to utter the master word of human life. This love, to continue The Speaker's Bible's comments, is the fundamental principal of spiritual health; and stands for all which is permanent and peaceful. It is the maker of character and the revealer of truth. It glows with the fire of a great passion, a passion which consumes, not the life in which it burns, as does the flame of Eros [the Greek god of love—a love which was fired with passion and laden with desire], but rather all the mean, dark, and shameful things which are morally alien to the good life.

The Text Explained

The Gift of Prophecy Is Superior to the Gift of Tongues (1 Cor. 14: 1-6; 18-20)

Follow after love; yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. For he that speaketh in a tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth; but in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men ed-

ification, and exhortation, and consolation. He that speaketh in a tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. Now I would have you all speak with tongues, but rather that ye should prophesy: and greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.

In urging the Corinthian brethren

to follow after love, Paul was simply exhorting them to put into practice that which he had said in chapter 13. He had told them in 1 Cor. 12: 31 to desire earnestly the greater gifts, and now he repeats practically the same thing; but in both instances he cautions them to temper their desire with love. Not only does this love excel everything else; it also co-ordinates and spiritually vitalizes every ability which the church may have and every function which it can perform. If Paul could lead the Corinthians to follow this way of service in the cause of Christ, then there would be no gift too great for them to covet.

It appears that the Corinthian Christians, or some of them at least, had the impression that the greatest spiritual gift which they could have was the gift of tongues; and they accordingly valued it above the others because of the importance it gave them in the eyes of the heathen. And in proportion to the value they placed on the gift of tongues, they undervalued the gift of prophecy which enabled them to edify the church, by speaking that which they could understand and appreciate. It was Paul's purpose, in contrasting these two gifts which the early church enjoyed, to correct this false idea which the Corinthians entertained. He began his effort at this correction by bringing into play the principle of love, and then by showing them the advantage they would have in speaking a language which would make a favorable impression on those who heard it.

To speak in tongues was the ability to speak a language which the speaker himself did not understand, but which might be employed for a useful purpose, provided he or some one else had the gift of interpretation; while to prophecy was to preach under divine guidance. It seems fair to assume from that which is said in the inspired discussion of the question now before us, that some of the Corinthians at least coveted that which they considered the most spectacular spiritual manifestations, and that they apparently wanted to use the church as a kind of stage for their display. Or, to state the same thing in another way, they aspired to be conspicuous figures among

their fellow Christians and the world about them.

It is clear from the text now before us, as well as from other portions of the chapter from which the text is taken, that the tongues which they desired to speak were not for the purpose of teaching some foreigner the truth, or to impress them with the fact that they were speaking for God, as was the case on Pentecost of Acts 2. This, of course, shows that they were not actuated by the right motive in their desire to excel. No one today can speak in tongues as a result of miraculous power which has been given to him, but there are men who can "speak in tongues" far above their fellows; and the impression is sometimes made that they are more interested in their *oratory*, than they are in teaching the truth of the Lord. The ability to sway multitudes with the King's English is a wonderful gift, and it should not be despised; but care should always be taken to see that its use is not abused. But speakers with this power are not always the offenders in such matters. It does not require much effort on the part of the careful observer to see that those in the pew are often more interested in a "good speaker," than they are in one who is primarily noted for his ability as a sound effective teacher of the word of God. It is of course, wonderful when these two traits are combined in the same individual; but if and when a choice must be made between the two, it is now, as it was in Paul's day, much better to edify the church by wholesome gospel teaching, than it is to make a vain display of one's ability as a pleasing speaker for the pleasure of the hearers.

I thank God, I speak with tongues more than you all: howbeit in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, than I might instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue. Paul did not want to leave the impression that he undervalued the ability to speak with tongues, but he wanted the Corinthian brethren to know that the gift could be greatly misused. Hence, he tells them that so far as the good which could be accomplished by the two—tongues and prophecy—he much preferred the latter. B. W. Johnson, in commenting on this passage, says,

"There is a lesson here to preachers who are so learned in their utterances that the people cannot understand them;" while David Lipscomb notes that "no higher estimate than this was ever put on practical wisdom . . . Paul argued so warmly in behalf of the understanding because he felt so deeply the importance of benefiting others."

Brethren be not children in mind: yet in malice be ye babes, but in mind be men. After making his argument regarding the superiority of intelligible speech for the practical benefit of the church, Paul next appeals to the good sense of his readers. The spirit of rivalry and the desire to excel, along with the love of the spectacular, were betraying the Corinthian church into a state of childishness, which was the very opposite of that broad intelligence and enlightenment which the members claimed for it. (Cf. 1 Cor. 8: 1; 10: 15.) In the words of Godet, "It is characteristic of the child to prefer the amusing to the useful, the shining to the solid." But Paul, as was his custom, softened this keen reproof by his use of the term "Brethren." The remainder of the paragraph (verses 21-25) contains Paul's illustration of the relative value of tongues in contrast with prophesying.

Direction for the Orderly Exercise of Spiritual Gifts

(1 Cor. 14: 26-28)

What is it then, brethren? When ye come together, each one hath a psalm, hath a teaching, hath a revelation, hath a tongue, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. If any man speaketh in a tongue, let it be by two, or at the most three, and that in turn; and let one interpret: but if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.

When the church assembles for worship, the entire group is to be edified, so that all together may do that which is pleasing to God; and so with that idea in mind, Paul gives direction for the orderly use of whatever gifts those present might have, so that each one could make a worthwhile contribution to the edification of the entire church. The apostle's principal discussion has been with reference to tongues and prophecy.

and he therefore places an equal limit on the number of each who might participate in a single service of the church. (See verses 29-33.)

It is fair to assume from the remarks which Paul makes regarding orderliness in the church, that several of the brethren had been speaking at the same time. This no doubt was especially true of those who had the gift of tongues. No one but an interpreter could understand that which they were saying, and since that was true, it appeared to make little difference with them as to how many were speaking at the same time. Such a situation would result in utter confusion, and especially for any non-members who might be present. When the apostles spoke in tongues on the day of Pentecost, the multitudes were deeply impressed, "because that every man heard them speaking in his own language" (Acts 2: 6); but in the case now before us, no one could understand what was being said.

It is, of course, impossible for any today to speak in tongues as the Corinthians did, but we should certainly get the lesson of orderliness in all of our meetings. The whole purpose, so far as the people are concerned, is edification and instruction; and if this is done in an orderly manner, the church will be built up and all who are present will be duly taught the word of God. Efforts should always be made for the participation of as many as can profitably benefit the church. In short, every member of the church should be encouraged to contribute whatever he is capable of doing, so long as it pleases the Lord and edifies the church. No one should be denied the opportunity of doing just that. (Cf. Matt. 25: 14-30.)

A Demand for the Recognition of Apostolic Authority

(1 Cor. 14: 37, 38)

If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord. But if any man is ignorant, let him be ignorant.

Paul has reached the end of his arguments regarding spiritual gifts and their use in the early church, and his purpose in these verses is to

set up a criterion by which to determine the recognition of the accuracy of his teaching. The apostle has made it plain throughout the epistle which we have been studying during this quarter that he is speaking by inspiration; and now he calls for a recognition of that fact by all who claim to be inspired. If any man considers himself to be a prophet, or in any way under the influence of the Spirit, let him acknowledge the fact that what I have written are the commandments of the Lord. This is precisely the same principle which Jesus employed when he spoke his final public message, prior to his crucifixion. "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life eternal; the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto me, so I speak." (John 12: 48-50.)

Later on when John wrote his first epistle, he said, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not Jesus is not of God: and this is the spirit of the antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it cometh; and now it is in the world already. Ye are of God, my little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they as of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he who is not of God heareth us not. By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." (1 John 4: 1-6.)

Any average person today who claims to believe that the Bible is the word of God will readily admit that it was written by inspired men; and if they are honest with themselves and God, it will not be difficult for them to determine whether or not any given proposition is of God, and whether or not anything which is required of the Lord's people, that is, anything which is proclaimed as being required of them, is really true. If he finds it in the Bible, then his only concern should be to make certain that he understands exactly what is said. That was the spirit which characterized the people of Berea when Paul and Silas spoke to them. "Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so. Many of them therefore believed; also of the Greek women of honorable estate, and of men, not a few." (Act 17: 11, 12.)

But when people come along and teach something which is contrary to that which is found in the inspired word of God, it should not be difficult for any one to detect his error. (Cf. Gal. 1: 6-9.) But it sometimes happens that people claim that they do not know whether to accept this or that requirement of the Bible, because they are not sure whether or not the writer was truly a messenger of God. Paul's answer to him is this. If after a careful examination of that which has been written, any one professes ignorance regarding its being of God, then he does so at his own peril, and must abide the consequences. Moffatt renders the two verses now under consideration in these words: "If anyone considers himself a prophet or gifted with the Spirit, let him understand that what I write to you is a commandment of the Lord. Anyone who disregards this will be himself disregarded." The Lord himself covered this same proposition in the Sermon on the Mount. (Cf. Matt. 7: 15-23.)

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Why did Paul discuss the question of

spiritual gifts so thoroughly?

Show how he went about the discussion

and his reason for so doing.

In what manner were the various gifts imparted to those who had them?

How did some of the Corinthian brethren apparently regard these gifts?

Why were the gifts necessary in the early days of the church?

On what basis were they distributed?

The Golden Text

Why was it proper for the Corinthians to "desire earnestly the greater gifts"?
 In what way is the same principle applicable to us today?
 What should be the attitude of those with lesser gifts and abilities?
 By what motive must the Lord's people always be actuated?
 What difference will "love" always make in life of any one?

The Gift of Prophecy Is Superior to the Gift of Tongues

What was Paul aiming at when he urged the Corinthians to follow after love?
 What relative importance did the brethren in Corinth attach to the spiritual gifts they had?
 Why did they apparently manifest this attitude?
 What effect did this attitude have on the work as a whole?
 What was Paul's purpose in contrasting the gifts of tongues and prophecy?
 Explain the meaning of the gifts of tongues and prophecy?
 Why were the Corinthians so anxious to speak in tongues in the church?
 What shows that they were not actuated by the right motive?
 In what way is this same principles applicable in our day?
 Show where the responsibility for the misuse of ability often lies.
 What should always be the controlling motive in such matters?

What did Paul say regarding the relative importance of these two gifts?
 In what way were the Corinthians showing themselves to be childish, rather than men?

Direction for the Orderly Exercise of Spiritual Gifts

On what basis did Paul place this part of his discussion of spiritual gifts?
 What had the brethren apparently been doing in the assembly?
 What result always followed such a practice?
 In what way may the same principle be applied now?
 How many different people should be used in a single service today?

A Demand for the Recognition of Apostolic Authority

In what way did Paul call for the recognition of his apostolic authority?
 Discuss this principle as it is set forth in other parts of the New Testament.
 Show the manner in which it can work with the average person.
 Why, then, do so many people ignore such authority?
 What should always be the attitude of any sincere person?
 Show that this was true of the Bereans.
 What does Paul say regarding those who say that they don't know about such matters?

Lesson XIII—September 29, 1963

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

Lesson Text

1 Cor. 15: 12-21, 50-58

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.

21 For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead.

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.

55 O death, where is thy victory?
O death, where is thy sting?

56 The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law:

57 But thanks be to God, who giv-

eth us the victory through our Lord Je'-sus Christ.

58 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."*
(1 Cor. 15: 44.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Cor. 15: 22-49.

Daily Bible Readings

September 23. M.....	Job and the Resurrection (Job 19: 25-29)
September 24. T.....	Enoch Preached the Resurrection (Jude 14-16)
September 25. W.....	Christ Promised a Home (John 14: 1-7)
September 26. T.....	Paul's Hope in Christ (2 Cor. 5: 1-10)
September 27. F.....	The Resurrection Chapter (1 Cor. 15)
September 28. S.....	Body to Be Changed (Phil. 3: 17-21)
September 29. S.....	Hope of the Resurrection (Phil. 3: 7-13)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—First Corinthians was written from Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

The question of a resurrection from the dead is strictly a Bible subject, insofar as its origin is concerned; for no one apart from God ever caused a dead person to live again. The term "resurrection" literally means a coming forth from the dead, a return from death to life; and that would be impossible if a death did not occur. While it is true that the conception of a resurrection was not thoroughly developed in the Old Testament, and the literal coming forth of the body from the dead is not frequently referred to in that part of the Bible, the idea is there; and some of the most comforting words on the subject, words which are often used today, were spoken by men of great antiquity. (See Job 14: 13-15; 19: 25-27; cf. Heb. 11: 17-19.)

But faith in the resurrection of the dead could not be full and complete during the Old Testament period; for the reason that everything pointed to the coming of the Messiah. The God of the Old Testament is the eternal, ever-living God, and while death came to practically every person during that period, to the wicked and righteous alike, as a result of sin, if redemption is to have a complete victory over sin and death, there must ultimately be the hope of a resurrection from the dead. In commenting on this aspect of the ques-

tion, Baker's Dictionary of Theology observes that "as faith in resurrection became increasingly common, more and more frequently expressed during the post-exilic and Maccabean periods, at the time of the advent of Christ it 'had become an almost universally accepted dogma of Palestinian Judaism and a test of orthodoxy' (William Fairweather, *The Background of the Gospels*, Edinburgh, 1908, p. 292). The Sadducean denial of the resurrection was an exception, and did not express the common view of first-century Judaism."

But when we come to the New Testament, the theme of the resurrection of the body, including that of Christ, is given more space than any other one fundamental Christian truth, with the possible exception of the death of Jesus. Christ seldom spoke of his approaching death without including a prediction of his resurrection within three days; and as an indication of his own power over death, he brought back to life three people who had died. It was in connection with the resurrection of Lazarus that Jesus uttered his famous words regarding the significance of that term. (See John 11: 21-26.) It appears that Martha had never realized that the resurrection had a spiritual bearing; she merely thought of it as a distant mysterious event, as

a mere matter of destiny, like that of birth and death. Jesus declares that he, and not some faraway event, is the resurrection, *and the life*. Life is the larger and inclusive idea, and resurrection is involved in life as an incident made necessary by the tem-

porary and apparent triumph of physical death. This view of the subject brings the resurrection of the dead closer to every child of God, since Christ takes it out of time, vitalizes, and puts it into the category of faith.

The Golden Text

"It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." This passage should be read in the light of its context: "But some one will say, How are the dead raised? and with what manner of body do they come? Thou foolish one, that which thou thyself sowest is not quickened except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but a bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other kind; but God giveth it a body even as it pleased him, and to each seed a body of its own. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fishes. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So also it is written, The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is of heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also

that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." (1 Cor. 15: 35-49.)

This paragraph is absolutely essential to the understanding of the New Testament teaching regarding the resurrection of the body. This is true because all through the ages, since men began to reason regarding the subject, an effort has been made to teach that the resurrection is a restoration of the present body, or at least some portions of it, by the reunion of the material elements of which it was composed at the time of its death. This belief that the material body would be raised again was an ancient heathen doctrine, and we are told that it led to the embalment of the body and the building of the Pyramids of Egypt. This false idea made its way into Judaism, but it has neither part nor lot in Christianity. It is Paul's purpose in the passage just quoted to show the fallacy of this materialistic notion; and he begins by showing that when a seed is planted, its material wrapping decomposes. This is the process by which the living principle within the body is set free; and another body which is suited to its needs is formed for it. In a similar manner, the spirit of man must be made free from the corruptible in which it has lived here upon the earth, so that it may receive the new and incorruptible body which God provides for it for its habitation with him in glory.

The Text Explained

Paul's Reply to a Fundamental Error
(1 Cor. 15: 12-19)

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? Paul's question here clearly implies that some of the members of the Corin-

thian church denied the reality of the resurrection; and that meant, of course, that they also denied the resurrection gospel. They, apparently, had gone a step further than some whom Paul mentioned in his second letter to Timothy, men who taught that the resurrection had already passed. "But shun profane bab-

blings: for they will proceed further in ungodliness, and their word will eat as doth a gangrene: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; men who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some." (2 Tim. 2: 16-18.)

It not only is interesting, but exceedingly profitable, to observe the manner in which Paul sought to demolish the Corinthian error regarding the resurrection. He began by stating the basic facts of the gospel which they had believed and by which they had been brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord. "Now I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures;" and he then introduced an array of witnesses of the resurrection of Christ which no sane or thoughtful person could gainsay. And he concludes the introductory portion of his argument with these challenging words: "so we preach, and so ye believed." (See 1 Cor. 15: 1-11.)

Too often brethren, in seeking to refute a false position, begin by a tacit, if not actually an implied, assumption that the error of the antagonists has a basis on which to stand. But Paul, as we have already seen, first entrenched his own position before advancing to demolish the claims of the opposition. If those who have a clear understanding of the truth of the Scriptures, and a firm grasp on the proposition in question, will see to it first of all that the truth regarding whatever subject they plan to discuss is stated in indisputable terms, they will find that those in error will find it exceedingly difficult to make an impressive reply. When John C. Calhoun was on his deathbed, he said of Daniel Webster, his great antagonist in constitutional law, "Show him a fact in the path of his argument, and Mr. Webster is dumb." This is not only splendid testimony to intellect-

ual integrity; it is also incontestable proof of the power of truth.

But of there is no resurrection of the dead, neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain. 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.

As Paul begins his work of demolishing error, he literally enters the territory of the opposition, and takes them in their own craftiness. His argument is a negative demonstration, which takes the form of a destructive hypothetical syllogism with two branches, the first of which is stated in the verses just quoted. Here the apostle deduces two propositions from the supposed non-existence of the fact of the resurrection, namely, (1) the *emptiness* (*kenos*) of both the preaching and faith regarding it; (2) the *falsity* of the witnesses attesting it. Thus Paul bluntly placed the proposition before the Corinthian skeptics. If anyone can prove the impossibility of a resurrection from the dead, he then by the same argument proves that Christ was not raised up; for he died as a man: he fully identified himself with the human race. (Cf. Heb. 2: 14-18.)

For if the dead are not raised, neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; and ye are yet in your sins. Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable.

These verses set forth the second branch of Paul's destructive hypothetical syllogism, namely, the unreality of the effects which were supposedly derived from the resurrection, if it did not take place. The original terms for "vain" in verses 14 and 17 are not the same. They are *kenos* and *metaios*, respectively; and while they are apparently used as synonyms, they are not identical. In commenting on their use, Trench says that "in the first is characterized the hollowness, in the second the aimlessness." And so with this "two-pronged" destructive hypothetical syllogism, Paul placed his opposers in Corinth, with reference to the resurrection, in the position of affirming

that the apostles were liars and that the new life and hopes of their fellow-Christians were illusions only, or of admitting their error and accepting the truth as Paul proclaimed it. (Cf. The Expositor's Greek Testament.) People who oppose the truth should be made to see something of the consequences of their error. (Cf. Rom. 1: 18f; 2 Thess. 2: 8-12.)

The Relation of Christ's Resurrection to Ours

(1 Cor. 15: 20, 21)

But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

In the preceding paragraphs of the chapter now under consideration, Paul has clearly proved the actuality of Christ's personal resurrection; and that is sufficient for him to make an unconditional affirmation regarding it. But Christ never stands alone in such matters. The apostle has already made it clear that he is the head of a body with many members (1 Cor. 12: 12ff.), and it is unthinkable that something can happen to the head without affecting the body. He is also "the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8: 29; cf. Col. 1: 18), and his own resurrection not only demonstrates that bodily resurrection is possible; it is inevitable for those who are in him, that is, in his body, which is the church. The Expositor's Greek Testament notes that the universal redemption of Christ's people from the grave is *indispensable* for the realization of human destiny and for the assured triumph of God's kingdom (verses 24-28). The apostle thus advances from the "experimental" (verses 12-19) to the "theological" proof of his proposition, much as he does in Rom. 5: 1-11, 12-21.

The expression "But now," with which verse 20 begins, marks the logical point which Paul has reached by the *reductio ad impossibile* (reduction to an impossibility) of the negative proposition which he assailed in verse 12. He then shows in the remainder of the paragraph (verses 13-19), as already pointed out, that Christ has been raised; and there is therefore a resurrection of the dead. "Now" the ground has been cleared and the foundation laid for the declaration

that the Christian dead shall rise in him—Christ has "been raised from the dead, the first fruits of them that are asleep." Godet notes that he has been raised in the manner and purpose, "not to remain alone in his estate of glory."

With the coming of Christ, death for the Christian is now regarded as a sleep. This does not mean that those who are asleep in Christ are unconscious, but rather that they are no longer alive to or in touch with those who are upon the earth (Luke 16: 19-31). The "firstfruits" have a very definite significance in the Bible, chief of which is the pledge or promise of the full harvest. And so, when the firstfruits were in, the farmer had within his possession an unsailable proof that the harvest was coming. The law of Moses required that the firstfruits be presented to God, as an acknowledgment that the land and all its fruits were a gift from him; and they were in turn allotted to the priests and Levites (Deut. 18: 1-5; Neh. 10: 35ff.). And since the firstfruits were both a sample and a pledge of the forthcoming harvest, its figurative use is here applied to Christ, whose rising is both the proof and pledge of the rest of the harvest; and so in joyful anticipation, Paul in effect exclaims, "The resurrection has begun!" Verse 21f. shows something of the relationship of the risen Christ with those who are asleep in him, as indicated by the "firstfruits." The resurrection of Christ is the pattern of our resurrection.

The Dead and the Living Will Be Fitted for Immortality

(1 Cor. 15: 50-58)

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, 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. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

In the paragraph which precedes the passage just quoted, Paul explains something of the nature of the resurrection, and informs us that the

body which we now have is not the one which we shall have in heaven. But since the spirit must have a body (2 Cor. 5: 1-5), the resurrection of the body is an essential part of the Divine plan, and is necessary to the fulfillment of God's purpose in Christ. But inasmuch as flesh and blood (the material) has no place in the spiritual realm, the change from the one to the other must be accomplished. This will be true of both the living and the dead at the time of the coming of Christ and the general resurrection; for at that time there will be some who have not entered into the sleep of death (1 Thess. 4: 13-18).

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. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

As Paul reaches this climax he breaks into a song of triumph over death, in the strain of Hosea's rapturous anticipation of Israel's resurrection from national death (see Hos. 13: 9-14). In the words of Watson, "A pardoned soul needs not fear death. He may look on death with joy, who can look on forgiveness with faith. To a pardoned soul death has lost his sting. Death to a pardoned sinner is like the arresting of a man after the debt is paid." In speaking of the sting of death, the idea is that of a serpent. Sin is the bite or sting with which he slays men, and the power or poisonous strength of sin was found in the curse which the law pronounced upon all offenders. The triple power of law, sin, and death is comparable to a firm chain, which can be broken only by "the word of the cross" (1 Cor. 1: 18; cf. Rom. 1: 16). Some one has noted that the glorious burden of the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians is the emancipation and enlargement

of life in the risen Christ. And having the large life, we are urged to live largely! Christianity emerges and expresses itself in a passionate enthusiasm for both God and humanity.

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. The original word for "vain" in this verse is *kenos*, which means empty or hollow. Verse 58 sets forth the specific course of action which all Christians should follow, and assigns the powerful motive for their faithfulness. The life which we now are experiencing is the sphere of our present labors for the Lord; but when this life is over and the glorious resurrection day has dawned, we shall be raised to new activities which shall never end (Rev. 22: 3). In the words of Kate Cameron,

When our work is ended, we shall
sweetly rest,
'Mid the sainted spirits, safe on
Jesus' breast;
All our trials over, we shall gladly
sing
Grave! where is thy vict'ry? Death!
where is thy sting?
Earth has many sorrows, but they
cannot last,
And our greatest troubles, quickly
will be past;
If we look to Jesus, he will give
us strength;
By his grace we shall be conquer-
ors at length.
When the storm is over, sweet will
be the calm,
After life's long battle, bright the
victor's palm;
And the cross of anguish which
now weighs us down,
We'll exchange in heaven for a
shining crown.
Though the dark waves roll high,
we will be undismayed,
"Let us pass over the river, and
rest under the shade,
Rest under the shade, rest under
the shade of the trees."

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today?
Repeat the golden text.
Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Show that the Bible is our only authentic

source of information regarding the resurrection of the dead.
What does the Old Testament teach on the subject?
Why is the resurrection of the dead so essential to the economy of God?

What difference is noted in the teaching regarding the question in the two Testaments?

In what manner did Christ teach and emphasize the subject?

Discuss his conversation with Martha about the question.

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances did Paul write the words which serve as our golden text for today?

What popular error did he seek to correct?

Paul's Reply to a Fundamental Error

What error did some of the Corinthian brethren hold?

How can you account for Christians entertaining such views?

In what way did Paul go about correcting the false notion of the Corinthians?

What was his aim in stating the fundamental facts of the gospel?

What mistake do some brethren sometimes make in seeking to counteract error?

What form of argument did Paul employ on the occasion now before us?

What was he seeking to show the Corinthians?

In what position did he place those who were holding the error?

What lesson should we learn from this?

The Relation of Christ's Resurrection to Ours

What fact does the resurrection clearly imply?

Discuss this in the light of the fact that Christ is the head of the body.

What is the force of the expression "But now" with which verse 20 begins.

What does the Bible teach regarding the question of death as a sleep?

What is meant by Christ's being the first-fruits of them that are asleep?

What was Paul's conclusion here?

The Dead and the Living Will be Fitted for Immortality

Why must a change be made before people can enter heaven?

In what way will this affect the dead and the living?

What does Paul mean by saying that we all shall not sleep?

What does he do when he reaches this climax?

What is meant by the sting of death?

What is the only way to break the triple power of law, sin, and death?

What is the great purpose of the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians?

What exhortation does Paul give for Christian living?

What great motive should prompt this?

Where must all of our present living be carried out?

FOURTH QUARTER
PAUL'S LETTERS TO THE CHURCH IN CORINTH

(Second Half of Six Months' Course)

AIM.—To increase our knowledge of these great Epistles, and to note the power of truth to lift people of pagan origin and unworthy conduct to a high plateau of noble Christian living.

Lesson I—October 6, 1963

PAUL WRITES ANOTHER LETTER TO THE
CORINTHIANS

Lesson Text

2 Cor. 1: 1, 2; 2: 1-11

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Je-sus through the will of God, and Tim'o-thy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Cor'-inth, with all the saints that are in the whole of A-cha'-ia:

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Je'-sus Christ.

1 But I determined this for myself, that I would not come again to you with sorrow.

2 For if I make you sorry, who then is he that maketh me glad but he that is made sorry by me?

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 comfort *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.

10 But to whom ye forgive anything, I *forgive* also: for what I also have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, for your sakes *have I forgiven it* in the presence of Christ;

11 That no advantage may be gained over us by Satan: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

Golden Text.—“For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears.” (2 Cor. 2: 4.)

Devotional Reading.—2 Cor. 1: 3-11.

Daily Bible Readings

September 30.	M.....	Church of God in Corinth (1 Cor. 1: 1-9)
October 1.	T.....	An Earlier Letter (1 Cor. 5: 9-13)
October 2.	W.....	Paul's Activities in Corinth (Acts 18: 1-4)
October 3.	T.....	Opposition in Corinth (Acts 18: 5-7)
October 4.	F.....	Paul before Gallio (Acts 18: 12-17)
October 5.	S.....	Sin in the Church in Corinth (1 Cor. 5: 1-8)
October 6.	S.....	Paul's Manner of Preaching (1 Cor. 2: 1-5)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Somewhere in Macedonia.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

First Corinthians, as we saw in the study of that letter, was written to correct some disorders in the Corinthian church and in response to a letter of inquiry which Paul had received from the Corinthian brethren. But there was something about Paul's epistle to them which evidently did not please them. Perhaps it was because he had so severely condemned their divisions into factions and parties. At any rate, First Corinthians did not have the effect upon the brethren in Corinth with the party spirit which Paul intended and hoped that it would have. Instead of renouncing their divided condition, it seems that it caused some of them to intensify their efforts along that line, with the result that at least one fairly large party was formed in direct opposition to Paul. Furthermore, it is evident that some influential and energetic person in Corinth made it his business to crystallize this momentary resentment against Paul, and see to it that the opposition was effectively used in an effort to destroy the apostle's influence in the Corinthian church. (Cf.

2 Cor. 11: 4.)

Thus, instead of causing the brethren in Corinth to give up their party spirit and blend themselves harmoniously into a unified church life, it appears that the factions themselves shifted just enough to unite all who for any reason objected to Paul. Many accusations and insinuations were made against him. His apostolic authority was denied, his motives were impugned, and his character for candor was assailed by the opposing faction. Paul refers to some of these things in Second Corinthians, chapters 10-13. This section of the epistle reflects something of the painful stage of the controversy which raged between Paul and the opposition in the Corinthian church.

News of the condition just de-

scribed soon made its way across the Aegean sea to Ephesus where Paul was laboring at that time. He, of course, was greatly disturbed when he heard of it. In all of his missionary endeavors up to that time, Corinth had been the first city in which he had really had time enough to get his work on a firm basis (cf. Acts 18: 11), and now this was the result! It brought him almost to the brink of despair. There is a possibility that he made reference to this great sorrow in 2 Cor. 1: 8-11. A mere threat of imprisonment or personal suffering, or even the danger of death itself, would not have shattered his morale and given him such anguish of spirit as that which he experienced when he received the sad news regarding the conditions which existed at that time in the Corinthian church. It was the thought that he was being disowned as a Christian leader by those who were so dear to him that almost broke his heart.

Paul's sharp criticism of the Corinthian brethren in his previous letter to them (our First Corinthians) was not the only thing which had offended some of his brethren in Corinth; they also took exceptions to the fact that he had changed his plans about visiting them. (See 2 Cor. 1:

15-24.) Paul had evidently told the Corinthian brethren of his original plans in a communication which antedated our First Corinthians; for it appears that he told them of the change in his plans in 1 Cor. 16: 5-9. This change in plans evidently gave Paul's enemies in Corinth a chance to accuse him of unprincipled equivocation—of being unable to make up his mind regarding his proposed visit to Corinth.

It was against this kind of background that Paul wrote his next letter to the Corinthians—known to us as Second Corinthians.

The Golden Text

This portion of our lesson is a part of the principal text, and it will be considered in its proper place.

The Text Explained

The Apostolic Salutation

(2 Cor. 1: 1, 2)

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, and Timo-

thy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints that are in the whole of Achaia: Grace to you and peace from

God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The effort to arrive at a satisfactory analysis of Second Corinthians has given Bible students great concern. In reading through the epistle, the thoughtful student is impressed by a significant diversity of tone. In the first nine chapters of the book, Paul consistently speaks of the situation in Corinth as being satisfactory. (Cf. 2 Cor. 7: 4-16.) Now, with the sentiment of the passage just cited in mind, consider the righteous anger and cutting sarcasm which characterize chapters 10-13. These chapters fairly tingle with indignation and denunciation. How can we account for this extraordinary incongruity of the two parts of Second Corinthians—chapters 1-9 and chapters 10-13? At least three possible solutions have been suggested—namely:

1. Chapters 1-9 were addressed mainly to the majority who favored Paul, while chapters 10-13 were addressed to the minority who opposed him. But if one will take the time to give the entire book a careful reading, it will not be very difficult for him to see that this view is extremely improbable. The letter as we have it is addressed to "the church of God which is at Corinth," and not to a majority or to a minority. In the part which is supposed to have been addressed in the main to the minority we have this statement: "This is the third time I am coming to you. At the mouth of two witnesses or three shall every word be established. I have said beforehand, and I do say beforehand, as when I was present the second time, so now, being absent, to them that have sinned heretofore, and to all the rest, that, if I come again, I will not spare; seeing that ye seek a proof of Christ that speaketh in me." (2 Cor. 13: 1-3a.)

Now, turning to the part which is supposed to have been addressed in the main to the majority, we read: "But I call God for a witness upon my soul, that to spare you I forbear to come unto Corinth." (2 Cor. 1: 23.) It is certain that the same subject is under consideration in both of the passages which have just been quoted, and it would take a wide stretch of the imagination and much

more liberty than the proper observance of the rules of grammar would allow to conclude that the same people were not the antecedent of the pronoun "you" in both references. No such distinction as a "majority" and a "minority" which would fit the theory that the two parts of the book were thus addressed is to be found in the Book of Second Corinthians. It is necessary therefore that we regard this theory as being extremely improbable.

2. It seems fairly evident from 2 Cor. 2: 4 and 7: 8 that Paul had written the Corinthians a letter which may be described as a "painful" or "sorrowful" letter. This letter was evidently not our First Corinthians; for that epistle cannot be accurately described by the terms *painful* and *sorrowful*. But since there was manifestly such a letter written within a short time before the references to it just cited were penned, it has been suggested that the letter, like the one mentioned in 1 Cor. 5: 9, may have been lost. All of this, of course, may be true, but any claim that such a letter was lost must be based on nothing stronger than a bare assumption. It is sometimes necessary to accept an assumption in an effort to arrive at a possible solution of a problem; but, in the final analysis, that should be the last resort. If there is a better way to explain the situation, that way should certainly have precedence over a mere assumption.

3. *Second Corinthians is a composite epistle.* There is a growing conviction among Bible students to the effect that the peculiar difference between the two sections of the book (chapters 1-9 and 10-13) is due to the fact that Second Corinthians, as we know the book, is in reality a composite epistle. This is to say that Second Corinthians is a collection of two or more epistles which Paul wrote to the church in Corinth at different times. The cheerful and satisfied character of the first nine chapters indicates a situation in the church of general loyalty to Paul, while the dissatisfied and anxious tone of the last four chapters discloses a situation of general disloyalty to him. Furthermore, there are some cross-references or pairs of parallel passages which exhibit a

phenomenon which is difficult to understand on the assumption that Second Corinthians is a literary unit. Consider, for example, (1) 2 Cor. 1: 23 and 2 Cor. 13: 2; (2) 2 Cor. 2: 3 and 2 Cor. 13: 10; (3) 2 Cor. 2: 9 and 2 Cor. 10: 6.

In each pair just cited the same thing is referred to in both verses. And, too, the verses in chapters 10 and 13 have the present or future tense, while those in chapters 1 and 2 have the past tense. These facts strongly indicate that the section containing chapters 10-13 was written before the section containing chapters 1-9, with the possible exception of 6: 14-7: 1. There is certainly nothing in this idea to detract either from the message of the epistle, or from its Pauline authorship. If this view is correct, it simply means that Paul wrote two or more shorter letters to the Corinthians which were, many years later, put together and published as one letter. Not only does this viewpoint not detract from the message and authorship of the epistle we know as Second Corinthians, but it does make it much easier to understand and explain the difference between the two sections of the letter. Any portion of God's word can best be studied in the light of the background against which it was written.

Paul's Reason for Deferring His
Visit to Corinth
(2 Cor. 2: 1-4)

But I determined this for myself, that I would not come again to you with sorrow. For if I make you sorry, who then is he that maketh me glad but he that is made sorry by me? 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. 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.

The full force of Paul's statement regarding the change in his plans concerning his proposed visit to Corinth can be seen only by reading 2 Cor. 1: 15-24 in connection with the passage just quoted. Beginning in

verse 15 Paul says, "And in this confidence I was minded to come first unto you, that ye might have a second benefit; and by you to pass into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come unto you, and of you to be set forward on my journey unto Judaea [cf. 1 Cor. 16: 1-8]. When I therefore was thus minded, did I show fickleness? . . .

"But I call God for a witness upon my soul, that to spare you I forbore to come unto Corinth." No one can read 2 Cor. 1: 15-23 without seeing that there is a marked contrast between the tone which is expressed there, and in 1 Cor. 16: 1-8. Something therefore must have happened to cause the apostle to give up the planned visit, and that he carefully points out when he invoked God as a witness against his soul, that he was telling the truth, namely, it was to spare them the punishment which he would have been compelled to inflict upon them because of their wrongdoing. This explanation is expressed in the past tense. Now, turning to 2 Cor. 13: 1-3 we read, "This is the third time I am coming to you. At the mouth of two witnesses or three shall every word be established. I have said beforehand, . . . as when I was present the second time, so now, being absent, to them that have sinned heretofore, and to all the rest, that, if I come again, I will not spare; seeing that ye seek a proof of Christ that speaketh in me." (Cf. 2 Cor. 12: 19-21.) These words are found in the painful and sorrowful letter which Paul had written unto the Corinthians, and he did not want to visit them until he had given them time to repent and get themselves right with God, and, of course, with him.

There are times in the lives of many people when it seems necessary to write a letter which will either make or break a situation. Paul was greatly disturbed when he learned how things were going in Corinth; but he was in no mood to give up in defeat or rest under the slander of his enemies there: instead, he resolved to write another letter and thereby make a supreme effort to regain his lost leadership, while bringing the Corinthian brethren to repentance. This should be a valuable lesson to us, when things

go wrong in our absence. Instead of rushing to the scene of action, it often is best to write a carefully worded letter and seek a reconciliation, rather than personally adding further fuel to the fire by our presence. We cannot, of course, bring the curse of God upon people as Paul could; but we can follow the principle of giving those in the wrong, if indeed they rather than we are guilty of sinful action, a chance to do the right thing.

A Plea for Forgiveness of the
Offender Who Had Caused So Much
Sorrow

(2 Cor. 2: 5-11)

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

It seems quite clear from 2 Cor. 2: 12, 13 that Paul was expecting to meet Titus in Troas with a report of the reaction of the Corinthians to the sorrowful letter which he had sent them; but when he failed to find him there, he went on into Macedonia in an effort to locate him. And after hearing the good report which Titus gave him, he burst forth in his song of thanksgiving, as reported in 2 Cor. 2: 14-17. The victory over the evil one had been won, and the Corinthian brethren had repented of their sinful conduct; but repentance must always be followed by appropriate fruits. (See Matt. 3: 8.) Some one had sinned grievously against both Paul and the brethren themselves; and "such a one" must now be restored in a spiritual of gentleness. (Gal. 6: 1.) The offender who is referred to in the passage now before us cannot, without straining a point, be identified with the man who was condemned in 1 Cor. 5: 1ff. There was nothing strictly personal about his relationship toward Paul and the Corinthian church as such.

But when we read chapters 10-13 of the letter now under consideration, it is easy to see that there was a man who had come to Corinth and had led the opposition against Paul.

"For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or if ye receive a different spirit, which ye did not receive, or a different gospel, which ye did not accept, ye do well to bear with him." (2 Cor. 11: 4.) This "character" had not only brought sorrow to Paul, but to the church too, especially when they learned of their sin. This was the man whom Paul wanted the Corinthians to forgive, lest he "should be swallowed up with his overmuch sorrow," which clearly indicates that he, too, had repented of his sins, or at least that he could be led to repentance.

Wherefore I beseech you to confirm your love toward him. For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye are obedient in all things. But to whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also: for what I also have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, for your sakes have I forgiven it in the presence of Christ; that no advantage may be gained over us by Satan: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

In speaking further of the offender now under consideration and the letter he wrote about it, Paul says, "For behold, this selfsame thing, that ye were made sorry after a godly sort, what earnest care it wrought in you, yea what clearing of yourselves, yea what indignation, yea what fear, yea what longing, yea what zeal, yea what avenging! . . . So although I wrote unto you, I wrote not for his cause that did the wrong, nor for his cause that suffering wrong, [that is, Paul himself], but that your earnest care for us might be made manifest unto you in the sight of God."

That which happened in Corinth can easily happen in many churches today. After godly men and women have done their work in getting the congregation started and well on its way to profitable service in the Lord, false teachers and hobby-riding brethren come along and not only alienate many of the brethren from their spiritual leaders, but also practically destroy the work which the church is doing. When Paul learned of the opposition which was being promoted against him in the church in Corinth, he wrote his sorrowful letter and urged the brethren to do

something about it. His first aim in writing was not for the benefit of the offender nor for his own suffering, but rather to bring the church to see its own sinful condition; and when once that was accomplished, the rest would be comparatively easy. (Read again 2 Cor. 7: 11, 12.)

It is always sinful to disturb the peace and harmony of churches which are doing their duty in the Lord's service, but when once the offenders have been properly dealt with, the work of forgiveness and rehabilitation must follow. There are too many brethren today who are content with crushing the opposition, without any thought of trying to save those in the wrong. With many, the principal thing is to establish and condemn the sin and the sinner, and then let the matter rest there. But the New Testament teaches that God does not want any soul lost (2 Pet. 3: 9), and that should be, and will be, the attitude of every faithful follower of Christ.

Satan's "devices" are his *designs*, and Paul knew them well; and it was for that reason that he both taught and practiced forgiveness. If Satan can get brethren to hold grudges and otherwise get them to manifest the wrong spirit toward each other, he knows that he will ultimately win the victory over them and bring them into his keeping. Paul's statement is rendered by Goodspeed in these words: "When you forgive a man, I forgive him too. For anything I have to forgive has been forgiven on your account, and as in the very presence of Christ, to keep Satan from getting the better of us. For we know what he is after." Jesus has made it plain that our own forgiveness depends upon our willingness to forgive others. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matt. 6: 14, 15.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What was Paul's principal purpose in writing First Corinthians?
What effect did the letter apparently have on the church in Corinth?
What was Paul's reaction to the news regarding the conditions there?
How were some of the Corinthian brethren affected by Paul's change in plans to visit them?

The Apostolic Salutation

What prompted Paul to write the Corinthians another letter?
What impression does a careful reading of Second Corinthians make on the thoughtful student?
How can we account for the difference in tone and character of the first and second parts of the epistle?
Give reasons for thinking, or not thinking, that the two parts were addressed mainly to the "majority" and the "minority," respectively.
What do you really think Paul's painful letter to the Corinthians was and what happened to it?
What are some reasons for thinking that Second Corinthians is in reality two or more short letters which Paul wrote to the brethren in Corinth?

Paul's Reason for Deferring His Visit to Corinth

Why did Paul change his plans regarding his proposed visit to the church in Corinth?
Why did he use such strong language regarding the matter?
Why did he write about the matter in the past tense in the first part of the book, and in the present and future tense in the latter part of it?
What did Paul mean by deferring his visit in order to "spare" the Corinthians?
Why did he write such a strong and vigorous letter to them?

A Plea for Forgiveness of the Offender Who Had Caused So Much Sorrow

What was Paul's reaction when he heard the good news regarding the change in attitude on the part of the Corinthians?
Who seems to have been the man who caused so much sorrow in the Corinthian work?
How do you account for the change for the better on the part of the Corinthians?
Show how the same sorrowful conditions are often created in congregations today?
What lesson do we learn from Paul about how to deal with them?
What must always follow the settling of church trouble, if God is to be pleased?
What are Satan's devices?
Why is forgiveness so essential?

Lesson II—October 13, 1963

THE CORINTHIANS, AN EPISTLE OF CHRIST

Lesson Text

2 Cor. 3: 1-10, 18

1 Are we beginning again to commend ourselves? or need we, as do some, epistles of commendation to you or from you?

2 Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men;

3 Being made manifest that ye are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in tables that are hearts of flesh.

4 And such confidence have we through Christ to God-ward:

5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God;

6 Who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

7 But if the ministration of death, written, and engraven on stones, came with glory, so that the children of Is'-ra-el could not look stedfastly upon the face of Mo'-ses for the glory of his face; which glory was passing away:

8 How shall not rather the ministration of the spirit be with glory?

9 For if the ministration of condemnation hath glory, much rather doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

10 For verily that which hath been made glorious hath not been made glorious in this respect, by reason of the glory that surpasseth.

18 But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“But unto this day, whensoever Moses is read, a veil lieth upon their heart.” (2 Cor. 3: 15.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Cor. 2: 14-17.

Daily Bible Readings

October 7. M.....	..... A Temple of God (1 Cor. 3: 16, 17)
October 8. T.....	..... The Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12: 12-27)
October 9. W.....	..... House of God (1 Cor. 4: 1-5)
October 10. T.....	..... Kingdom of Christ (Matt. 16: 13-20)
October 11. F.....	..... Household of God (1 Tim. 3: 14, 15)
October 12. S.....	..... Fold of Christ (John 10: 1-18)
October 13. S.....	..... Seal of Paul's Apostleship (1 Cor. 9: 1, 2)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Somewhere in Macedonia.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

When we think of the epistles of Paul, we naturally think of the letters which he wrote to the churches and individuals of his day; but they are not what he had in mind when he penned the words of our lesson text for today. The "epistle" which we are to consider in this study was not written upon paper, or any other material in that category; but upon the hearts and characters of living people. If the people who profess to follow Christ today could be made to realize the full significance of the

truth that the message of Christ is indeed written in their hearts and lives, and to act accordingly; it would not be long until mankind could truthfully say, "The face of all the world is changed, I think, since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul." But in spite of what the Lord's people may or may not be doing with respect to the matter just referred to, they are making a lasting impression upon both their own brethren and the world about them; for they are, in a very true sense, the Lord's

representatives here upon the earth. (Cf. Matt. 5: 13-16; 1 Pet. 2: 11, 12.)

The Speaker's Bible has pointed out that the character of a communication must always be determined by the nature of the medium through which it is made. This is a universal law, and its applications and developments are full of interest, as well as the source of all that which we call "style" in literature. The common thought must clothe itself in plain, homely, and familiar words, while the grander and loftier conception creates for itself a fitting vesture, and moves in the glory of some picturesque and stately phrase. Some things can be fitly expressed only in verse, others only in prose; but there comes a time when one passes beyond that which language has the power to express in any way. There are some things which can be revealed to us only through music, others can be expressed only by marble or canvas, and still others only through Nature, which has been called God's Art. (Cf. Psalm 19: 1f.) The true artist is one in whom the feeling of the fitness of the message and the medium of its expression are clearly understood and by him made known. This is true because the message is dumb without its true medium of

expression, and the medium without its worthy message is insignificant and weak.

In view of such statements as the following: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet" (Heb. 2: 6b-8; cf. Psalm 8), it is certain that the highest and finest element in the life of the world is human nature; and it is for this reason that the loftiest and fullest revelations have been given through the medium of human nature. That which could not be spoken in words, breathed through music, or made known through the subtle harmonies of Nature (cf. Rom. 1: 20), was revealed in man. Throughout the history of the Bible, a human life often became God's voice, or his penman, to make known his divine truth; and it was according to this principle that "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1: 14; cf. Heb. 1: 1, 2). There are some things which can best, and often must, be told through living epistles.

The Golden Text

"But unto this day, whensoever Moses is read, a veil lieth upon their heart." This statement should be considered in the light of its historical setting (Ex. 34: 29-35) and the context in which it is found in the epistle now under consideration. "Having therefore such a hope, we use great boldness of speech, and are not as Moses, who put a veil upon his face, that the children of Israel should not look stedfastly on the end of that which was passing away: but their minds were hardened: for until this day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remaineth, it not being revealed to them that it is done away in Christ. But unto this day, whensoever Moses is read, a veil lieth upon their heart. But whensoever it shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away." (2 Cor. 3: 12-16.)

Paul's aim in the section of Second Corinthians from which our lesson text is taken (2 Cor. 3: 1-4: 6)

was to draw the contrast between the ministration of righteousness in his hands, and the ministration of condemnation as exemplified by his Judaizing opponents, and then to vindicate his apostolic ministry in the light of that contrast. Moses had typically veiled his face, that is, the veiling of his face served as a type, so that the children of Israel could not see the end of that which was passing away, that is, the end of that dispensation (cf. Rom. 10: 4), with the result that their minds (cf. 2 Cor. 4: 4; 11: 3) were hardened. This was the exact opposite of the result which was produced by Paul's frank discharge of his ministry. The marginal reading for "minds" is *thoughts*, and the idea is that as long as the people of Israel *thought* as they did regarding the Mosaic dispensation, they would continue to rebel against the gospel of Christ. They failed to see that Moses was preaching Christ. (Cf. John 5: 45-47.)

There was also a time in the ministry of Jesus when he veiled his teaching from the minds of those who did not believe in him (cf. Matt. 13: 10-17), but that practice ceased when the full light of the Christian dispensation dawned. All men today are held responsible, not for what they *think* about the teaching of Christ, but for what the New Testament actually says. "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I

spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life eternal; the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto me, so I speak." (John 12: 48-50.) When Israel turned to Christ, their misconceptions regarding him were removed, and the same is true when people today are willing to accept the plain and unadulterated testimony of the Scriptures. (See Gal. 1: 6-9; John 7: 17.)

The Text Explained

The Corinthian Christians Were Proof of Paul's Divine Ministry

(2 Cor. 3: 1-3)

Are we beginning again to commend ourselves? or need we, as do some, epistles of commendation to you or from you? Ye are our epistles, written in our hearts, known and read of all men; being made manifest that ye are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in tables that are hearts of flesh.

Paul's questions, with which this section of our lesson text begins, were occasioned by his remark in the last verse of the preceding chapter: "For we are not as the many, corrupting the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ." (2 Cor. 2: 17.) His enemies in Corinth apparently had charged that he was guilty of self-laudation, and that by dishonest means. (Cf. 2 Cor. 4: 2; 10: 12, 18.) It is as if they had said, as Vincent has it, "You are beginning again the old strain of self-commendation as in the first epistle." (See 1 Cor. 9: 15-23.) The apostle had already reminded the Corinthians that they should have commended him (2 Cor. 12: 11.)

After getting the issue squarely before the Corinthian brethren, Paul quickly points out that he, the one who first brought the gospel to their city and who was responsible for the planting of the church there, had no need to present formal credentials to that congregation; and that it would be equally out of place for him to seek recommendations from them. The apostle already had testimonies

to his character and office which were far superior to any which might be written on the writing materials of their day; and he made it clear that these letters of commendation could easily be pointed to, if any wanted to charge that his apostolic office was self-assumed or that he delivered his gospel message in his own way and by his own authority. (Cf. Gal. 1: 11, 12.)

The Corinthians themselves were Paul's credentials. "If to others I am not an apostle, yet at least I am to you; for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord." (1 Cor. 9: 2.) In saying, "Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts," Paul may have had in mind his labors among them which had left an indelible impression upon his heart. In commenting on the term "epistle," Vincent notes that "the figure which follows is freely and somewhat loosely worked out, and presents different faces in rapid succession. The figure itself is that of a *commendatory letter* representing the Corinthian Church: 'Ye are our letter.' This figure is carried out in three directions: 1. *As related to the apostles' own consciousness.* The Corinthian Church is a letter written on the apostles' hearts. Their own consciousness testifies that that Church is the fruit of a divinely accredited, honest, and faithful ministry. 2. *As related to the Corinthians themselves.* The Church needs no letter to commend the apostles to it. It is its own commendation. As the visible fruit of the apostles' ministry they are a commendatory letter to themselves. If the question arises among them, 'Were Paul and his colleagues duly

commissioned?'—the answer is, 'We ourselves are the proof of it.' 3. As related to others outside the Corinthian Church. The answer to the charge that the Corinthians have been taught by irregular and uncommissioned teachers is the same: 'Behold the fruit of their labors in us.' We are their commission.'

Paul appears never to lose sight of the fact that Christianity is a communication of life—the life of him who is the source of all life; and when that life is made a part of every obedient believer's life (cf. Col. 3: 4), it is easy for those about him to see that he is "an epistle of Christ." This kind of epistle cannot be written by men, as letters are usually written; instead, it is ministered by inspired men, and it is written in the hearts of those who accept the gospel. Some one has observed that life does not begin with a man until he is filled with the truth, which the joy of his existence makes it necessary for him to utter. Then what he is proclaims the truth which he believes. Thus, it is the glorious privilege of the child of God to make the truth seem more true, and to make a lie seem more false, by the way he lives. This is the practical meaning of being an epistle of Christ, so far as we are concerned.

The Splendor of the New Faith (2 Cor. 3: 4-10)

And such confidence have we through Christ to God-ward; not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God; who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

Paul indeed was filled with confidence, but he hastens to explain that it was not self-confidence. No uninspired man could write such an epistle as Paul had written in Corinth, or fulfil such a ministry as he had accomplished, without divine help. The truth which had been written in their hearts, and which had transformed them, was of God. He had called the apostles, and had made them sufficient for the task of ministering the new covenant which is the divine instrument for the regen-

eration of lost men. The Standard Bible Commentary paraphrases this portion of the lesson text in these words: "The truth, which, written in your hearts, has thus transformed you, is wholly of God; so that our ability or sufficiency to write such an epistle as ye are, is all from God, who made us thus sufficient by calling us to be ministers of that new covenant which performs such wonders of regeneration, instead of calling us to be (as my Judaizing opponents ever seek to coerce me to be) a minister of the old covenant. This old covenant was given in letters graven on stone, and hence was a law of letters governing us wholly from without. But the new covenant, though also committed to writing, and hence in a sense external to us, is a code of principles governing us from within, through the power of the Holy Spirit. This law of letters without could only bring upon us condemnation and death (Rom. 7: 7-11; 1 Cor. 15: 56); but this law of the spirit within us (verse 2) gives us life (Rom. 2: 27-29; 6: 4, 11; 8: 2, 10, 11; 1 Cor. 15: 41; Gal. 5:18). The contrast in verse 6 is not between the outward and inward sense of Scripture, but between the outward and inward power of those two great dispensations, Jewish and Christian."

But if the ministration of death, written, and engraven on stones, came with glory, so that the children of Israel could not look stedfastly upon the face of Moses for the glory of his face; which glory was passing away: how shall not rather the ministration of the spirit be with glory? For if the ministration of condemnation hath glory, much rather doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For verily that which hath been made glorious hath not been made glorious in this respect, by reason of the glory that surpasseth.

This passage is one of several in the New Testament in which the inspired writer draws a contrast between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ. (Cf. Gal. 3: 15-4: 7; Heb. 8: 6-13.) The law of Moses is called the ministration of death, because it condemned all violations of it and all failures to keep it (cf. Heb. 2: 2), and gave pardon to none. The gospel of Christ, on the other hand,

imputes righteousness to all who obey it and plainly declares that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. (Rom. 8: 1.) Paul told his hearers in Antioch of Pisidia that those who believe in Christ are "justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13: 39). Thus, throughout the New Testament, the contrast between the two systems is plainly stated.

The failure of the Judaizers of Paul's day to understand this difference between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ was the chief cause of the trouble in the church in Corinth; and it was for the purpose of clearing up that misunderstanding that the words of the text before us were written. The law of Moses was glorious, in that it came from God (see again Ex. 34: 29-35); but since that system was only a temporary measure, its glory in time faded in the brighter glory of the gospel of Christ. This lesson was sorely needed in Paul's day; and if one will only look around him now, it will not be difficult for him to see that it is still needed. It is a prominent fact that many among the denominations proceed on the assumption that the Lord's people today are indiscriminately under Moses, the prophets, and the Lord Jesus Christ. No one can read the first part of the Book of Hebrews without being impressed with the finality of God's message to man, as it is spoken through Christ. In him God has spoken everything which he has to say, and that means that he has said everything which man needs to hear, in order to be well pleasing unto him. Peter also makes this matter clear when he declares, "Moses indeed said, A prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you from among your brethren, like unto me; to him shall ye hearken in all things whatsoever he shall speak unto you. And it shall be, that every soul that shall not hearken to that prophet, shall be utterly destroyed from among the people." (Acts 3: 22, 23.) The glory of the place and authority of Moses has long since been eclipsed by that of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Cf. Heb. 3: 1-6.)

Transformed by Beholding
(2 Cor. 3: 18)

But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit. Only Moses reflected the glory of God when he delivered the law to the people of Israel, but now all Christians have that privilege—"but we all." The process now under consideration may very properly be called the Lord's method of sanctification. Or, to state the same thing in another way, this is the Lord's method of making us like his Son. The Holy Spirit has revealed Christ to us, and we all, with unveiled face are permitted to behold that glory; and as we continue the process, we are changed from one degree of glory to another; until eventually we shall be made into his image. "Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is. And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (1 John 3: 2, 3.)

The idea of "beholding" the glory of the Lord is not an indifferent matter. The original word for "beholding as in a mirror" is a present participle, and it implies a continuous process. "And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (1 John 3: 3; cf. 1 Pet. 1: 22; Col. 3: 1-4.) The truth is that we can look upon the glory of the Lord, only as we obey that which the Spirit has set forth regarding him. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Rom. 12: 1, 2.)

The lives of many Americans have been enriched by Hawthorne's story of the Great Stone Face. A boy, as the story is told, lived in the shadow of the Great Stone Face; and all during his lifetime he dreamed of a day when a man would come to their

village with a face that would reflect the calm and peace of the Man of the Mountains. But while waiting for the benevolent man to come, the boy never cease to look upon and study the face which was ever before him. Years passed, but his dream remained unfulfilled. His hopes, however, never faltered; for he verily believed that he would one day see the man with a face like the one in the mountains. At last this boy came to be an old man; and one evening

as he stood before a small crowd in the village, a man exclaimed, "Your face," sir, "is exactly like that of the Great Stone Face." Thus, the very one who had dreamed so long of a face which would match the one of the Mountains had wrought such a likeness in himself.

We shall be like him, O golden day!
We shall be like him, O happy day!
When life is over by and by,
He will greet us face to face beyond
the sky. —D. Lauk Currens.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What did Paul mean by saying that the Corinthian Christians were as epistles of Christ.
What kind of impression should this make on the Lord's people today?
Why is this such an important lesson for us?

Discuss the importance of the *medium* through which a message is made known.

What has been the highest and fullest method through which God's message has been revealed?

The Golden Text

Give the historical setting and the context of this portion of our lesson for today.

Why did Moses put a veil upon his face?
What was the typical import of that act?
What caused the children of Israel to have their minds hardened?

How alone may that be remedied?
What was Paul's purpose in discussing that incident in Israel's history?

What great responsibility rests upon people today with reference to God's revelation?

The Corinthian Christians Were Proof of Paul's Divine Ministry

Why did Paul ask the questions in verse one of this section of our lesson?

Why didn't Paul need epistles of commendation to or from the Corinthian brethren?

In what senses were the "Corinthian epistles" used?

What view of Christianity did Paul always keep before him?

When does a man really begin to live?

What great privilege regarding the gospel belongs to every child of God?

The Splendor of the New Faith

What kind of confidence did Paul always enjoy in his work as a minister of Christ?

What was the source of Paul's "sufficiency" and why did he mention it?

Discuss the contrast between the two covenants—the old and the new.

Why is this contrast discussed so often in the New Testament?

What can you say regarding the need for distinguishing between them today?
Give reasons for your answer.

How would you go about teaching a person that we are not under the law of Moses today?

Transformed by Beholding

What is the significance of the expression "but we all"?

In what sense do we behold the glory of the Lord?

How are we changed by beholding the glory of Christ?

What is signified by "beholding"?
Illustrate how this is accomplished?

Lesson III—October 20, 1963

LOOKING FOR THINGS ETERNAL

Lesson Text

2 Cor. 4: 5-18

5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Je'-sus' as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Je'-sus' sake.

6 Seeing it is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Je'-sus Christ.

7 But we have this treasure in

earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves;

8 *We are* pressed on every side, yet not straitened; perplexed, yet not unto despair;

9 Pursued, yet not forsaken; smitten down, yet not destroyed;

10 Always bearing about in the

body the dying of Je'-sus, that the life also of Je'-sus may be manifested in our body.

11 For we who live are always delivered unto death for Je'-sus' sake, that the life also of Je'-sus may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

13 But having the same spirit of faith, according to that which is written, I believed, and therefore did I speak; we also believe, and therefore also we speak;

14 Knowing that he that raised up the Lord Je'-sus shall raise up us also with Je'-sus, and shall present us with you.

15 For all things *are* for your sakes, that the grace, being multiplied through the many, may cause the thanksgiving to abound unto the glory of God.

16 Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day.

17 For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory;

18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Golden Text.—“The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (2 Cor. 4: 18.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Cor. 4: 1-4.

Daily Bible Readings

October 14.	M.....	Place Prepared (John 14: 1-6)
October 15.	T.....	Resurrection Promised (Dan. 12: 1-3)
October 16.	W.....	Body Changed (Phil. 3: 17-21)
October 17.	T.....	Paul's Strait (Phil. 1: 21-30)
October 18.	F.....	Deliverance in Future (2 Tim. 4: 1-18)
October 19.	S.....	Shall See Christ (1 John 3: 1-3)
October 20.	S.....	Throne Scene (Rev. 5: 1-14)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Somewhere in Macedonia.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

After telling the Colossians that they had died with Christ from the rudiments of the world (Col. 2: 20), and had been buried with him in baptism, “wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead” (Col. 2: 12), Paul gave them this exhortation: “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. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory.” (Col. 3: 1-4.)

The words which have just been quoted contain that which has been called the golden secret of progress; for to be raised with Christ is to possess a new outlook on life, and hence to have a new standard by

which to measure the values of life. Any one who has entered into the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, and has partaken of the benefits of his atonement, has learned to estimate “the things which are seen” in their true light, that is, as being only temporal. We must look beyond the things of time and sense, if we are to have a vision of the things which are eternal. Transient things are always transient, here or anywhere; they cannot last. And by the same token, eternal things are always eternal, here and everywhere; they cannot help but last. And it is for this reason that Jesus calls us to a *quality of life* (a new kind of life, Rom. 6: 3, 4; 2 Cor. 5: 17; Tit. 3: 5) which is eternal here and now (John 5: 24; 1 John 3: 14; John 17: 3).

Any one who regards Christ as his life (Col. 3: 4) is content to lose the world, in whatever measure such loss may be necessary, just because he has gained that which eternally

satisfies. But even so, such a person does not really lose anything which is worthy of possessing; for it is by subordinating all things to the loftiest control that all of life's worthy aims are ennobled and delivered from that which corrupts. Too often, if we allow our interests to center in things of this life, we find ourselves being down-graded, not necessarily because such things are wrong in and of themselves; but because their compelling force is not controlled and made subject to the higher duty, that of seeking the things which are above, (cf. Matt. 6: 33.) If the Christian is willing to use that which is before him as a means for seeking the glory of God, he will soon find that he can distinguish between that which is for his good and that which should be avoided, (cf. Heb. 5: 14.)

The supreme aim of the Christian, let it be emphasized again, is an upward one. His life is a pursuit—"seek the things that are above." Before people are converted to Christ,

they are seeking; but their quest is for that which the world has to offer. But having accepted the way of Christ, the aim of their lives changes. This idea is clearly set forth in Col. 3 where Paul points out the sins which are to be avoided (verses 5-11) and the virtues which are to be cultivated (verses 12-17). In the words of *The Great Texts of the Bible*, the spiritual conceptions and aspirations of the those who have been raised with Christ are expressed in the ordinary activities of their lives before others, and they make all the necessary duties of their lives but stepping-stones to the realization of the higher realities. Indeed, the direction of all our external doings is in the nature of things determined and controlled by the power of our inner life. Therefore, to realize that we have been raised with Christ lends to all life a sanctifying force which manifests itself in every sphere and realm. Such people make it their aim to seek for things which are eternal. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 9.)

The Golden Text

This portion of our lesson is a part of the principal text, and it will be considered in its proper place.

The Text Explained

The Character of the Message Which Paul Proclaimed

(2 Cor. 4: 5, 6)

For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. This verse should be understood, or so it appears, in the light of Paul's defense of his ministry in the face of the criticism which he received from the Judaizing teachers, who had caused him so much trouble. He had already told the Corinthian brethren something of his attitude in this respect: "For we are not as the many, corrupting the word of God: but of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ." (2 Cor. 2: 17.) And again, "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, even as we obtained mercy, we faint not: but we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight

of God." (2 Cor. 4: 1, 2.) The shameful conduct of the Judaizing teachers is further described in the last four chapters of the Second Corinthian letter.

Paul tells his readers in the passage now before us (1) what he does not do, and then (2) the aim of his preaching, and finally (3) the three-fold relationship which characterized it. In commenting on the first proposition, A. T. Robertson notes that for one to preach himself "is the poorest theme ever taken by a preacher." He then goes on to say that it is bad homiletics, as well as bad religion. When a preacher is full of himself, he is certain to reveal it in a number of ways. Such a preacher may think that he is very clever and that his hearers will not be aware that he is in reality trying to further his own cause; but in that he is sadly mistaken. Paul's estimate of such preachers is expressed in these words: "For we are not bold to number or compare ourselves with certain of them that c o m m e n d

themselves: but they themselves, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves, are without understanding." (2 Cor. 10: 12.)

The apostle Paul's aim always was to preach Jesus Christ, and him crucified (1 Cor. 2: 2), and if there was ever a man who hid himself behind the cross, so that the people could have an unobstructed view of Christ, that man was the great apostle to the Gentiles. But it would be impossible for a devoted servant of Christ to preach Christ as he should, without preaching himself as the servant of others; for that was the very thing that Jesus himself taught. (See Matt. 20: 20-28.) Paul was a slave, both of the Lord and those whom he was trying to lead to Christ. If preachers everywhere would manifest that spirit, it would make all the difference in the world in their preaching. This is the essential meaning of cross-bearing.

Seeing it is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. This appears to be the reason which Paul gave for saying that he and his fellow-workers did not preach themselves. God, in keeping with the principle which characterized his work as recorded in Gen. 1: 3 (cf. Psalm 112: 4), had so illuminated their minds with the truth as to enable them, by its simple proclamation, to cause others to see the glory of the Lord. This further showed that there was nothing secret or crafty about their ministry; and in keeping with the image of 2 Cor. 3: 18, they were reflecting the light which shone upon them from the Divine Glory, as manifested in Christ.

It is significant that the light of the knowledge of the glory of God is in the face of Jesus Christ. This is to say that Jesus Christ came into the world to reveal the Father to the human race (cf. John 14: 8, 9.) Anyone who will look earnestly into the face of Jesus will certainly be able to see the Father. The term "face" as used in the verse now before us does not refer to the physical features of Jesus; it is, rather, a figure of speech in which a part is used for the whole. There is, indeed, not much

that we know about the physical features of Jesus, (cf. Isa. 53.) So far as we know no portrait or other representation was ever made of him from life. The gospel records do not contain a description of the person of our Lord but rather of his character. The few hints which are given in the inspired record regarding some members of his body do not contain enough information for a picture. When Paul therefore speaks of "the face of Jesus Christ" he has reference not to his countenance but to his character, personality, being. Jesus Christ is the "good news" incarnate; and it is in him that the glory of the gospel of our salvation must be seen. (Cf. John 1: 4; 2 Cor. 5: 18 19.)

The Source of the Power Which Sustained Him (2 Cor. 4: 7-15)

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves; we are pressed on every side, yet not straitened; perplexed, yet not unto despair; pursued; yet not forsaken; smitten down, yet not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested, in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

"This treasure" is the light of the knowledge of the glory of God (verse 6), or, which is the same thing, the divine light which was the guide and inspiration of the apostolic ministry (so Vincent, *in loco*). Paul speaks of this same thing in 2 Cor. 5: 18, 19: "But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation." This is to say that the truth which makes men free (John 8: 31, 32) or the gospel plan of salvation was revealed to, or lodged in the apostles; and through them was made known to the human race (John 20: 21-23). It was therefore only through the apostles, as

the plenipotentiary ministers of Christ that any one could learn the truth at the beginning, but now it is different; for what they then had in earthen vessels, that is, in the apostles, we now have in book form. The truth is no longer to be learned from human beings who have had it revealed to them by the Holy Spirit.

Paul was frequently criticized by his Judaizing opponents as being weak in bodily appearance and rude in speech (cf. 2 Cor. 10: 10; 11: 6); and it was for that reason that they endeavored to make it appear that the physical infirmities and bodily persecutions which he suffered all but nullified his ministry. The passage now under consideration is the apostle's reply to his critics. The Standard Bible Commentary, in speaking of this, notes that God has committed his gospel to men that it may be evident to all that it is from him. No mere human being could originate such truth, (cf. Isa. 55: 8, 9.) The power of the gospel so transcends the human agent through whom it is made known as to make it certain that the preacher is but the medium through whom the Divine Power is working, and that he is simply performing duties which would be wholly impossible for him to do, without aid from on high. And so Paul is here supposing that his enemies are objecting to his high claims for the apostolic ministry, on the ground that his suffering and humiliation are wholly inconsistent with the idea that he could be an ambassador of the God of heaven.

Paul's answer to the charges of his opponents to the effect that such a humble person could occupy such an exalted position is that God put his treasure in earthen vessels, and then shows by the survival of the perishing containers, which were subjected to all manner of harsh treatment, the value, in God's sight, of the treasure within them. The story is told of a man who was taunted by the emperor's daughter because of his unattractive appearance. His reply to her was that her father kept his wines in earthen vessels, and she immediately requested that the wine be transferred to silver containers; but when that was done it turned sour. When the princess saw what had happened to her father's wine, it was easy for the man whom she had

sought to ridicule to make her see that the humblest vessels may contain the highest wisdom.

Even Socrates, the sage of Athens, was easily mistaken for an ignorant peasant; for we are told that in his personal appearance he was "odd and even ugly, conspicuously so among a handsome race." But according to Plato, the great Socrates was able to veil himself behind an ironical profession of ignorance, and then manifest an ingenuity and resourcefulness which made him more than a match for the most distinguished specialists of his city. A handsome appearance and an impressive personality does not always mark its possessor as being the best qualified individual for a work of wisdom. (Cf. 1 Sam. 16: 6, 7.) Some churches might learn a lesson here in the matter of selecting preachers and church leaders. (Cf. Gal. 2: 20.)

But having the same spirit of faith, according to that which is written, I believed, and therefore did I speak: we also believe, and therefore also we speak; knowing that he that raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also with Jesus, and shall present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that the grace, being multiplied through the many, may cause the thanksgiving to abound unto the glory of God.

Those who are familiar with Paul's writings are aware of the fact that his quotations of Old Testament passages are not always verbatim, as may be seen by reading the psalm from which the quotation of verse

13 was made. (Psalm 116: 10.) There were apparently at least two reasons for this, namely, (1) many of his quotations were from the Septuagint Version (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament); and (2) he frequently adapted the quotation to a situation which was not in the original idea of the older record. (Cf. Deut. 31: 1-6; Josh. 1: 1-5 = Heb. 13: 5.) The exhortations to Moses and Joshua were not with reference to the love of money, as in the case of the writer of Hebrews.

The writer who composed the psalm from which Paul quoted (Psalm 116) was expressing his thanks to Jehovah for his deliverance from death; and he was willing to proclaim his faith in spite of his

afflictions. And it was in that same spirit of faith that Paul was fulfilling his ministry, that is, he was continuing his work in spite of the opposition which he was daily encountering. The spirit referred to here by Paul was the motivating influence behind all of his work as a Christian; and it is not out of place to say that a deep conviction in the over-all purpose of God for his people is the mainspring of every great effort which is made to advance the cause of Christ. A man with this kind of faith is never still, and he will not hesitate to express his convictions on any subject which is involved in our duty to God and to our fellow men. The fact that he may frequently be criticized and opposed by others will not cause him to sacrifice his conviction; because his aim is to please God. This was substantially the principle which David Thoreau had in mind when he said, "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away." (Cf. Jer. 20:9.)

The daily preservation of their lives and the hope of the resurrection were sufficient to encourage the apostles to continue in their work, despite the suffering and humiliation which they were constantly called upon to endure. And, too, he wanted the Corinthian brethren to know that the entire gospel ministry was for their sakes, along with all other Christians; and that the greater number of believers, the greater would be the grace of God bestowed, and that, in turn, would mean more glory to God. This should give us some idea of the motive which actuated Paul in his work for Christ.

The Reason for His Great Optimism

(2 Cor. 4: 16-18)

Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Williams renders this paragraph in these words: "So I never give up; instead, although my outer nature is wasting away, my inner nature is constantly renewed from day to day. For this slight and momentary sorrow continues to accumulate for me a solid and eternal glory far beyond any comparison, because I do not keep my eyes on things that are seen but things that are unseen. For things that are seen are temporary, but things that are unseen are eternal." Thus, with Paul it did not make any difference how much he was called upon to suffer: if God preserved his life here in the flesh, he would continue to press on toward the eternal goal. That is why his thoughts were continuously on that which the human eye cannot see, but rather on that which only can be seen by faith. (Cf. Heb. 11: 1, which is rendered in The New English Bible in this way: "And what is faith? Faith give substance to our hopes, and makes us certain of realities we do not see.")

The Speaker's Bible observes that nothing is clearer from the reading of the gospel records than that to Jesus the unseen realm of life was just as real as that which men see every day, and of infinitely greater significance. He said that he lived by the unseen Father, the God "whom no man hath seen, nor can see." Disclaiming all original powers, he declared frankly that he could do nothing of himself, but only what he saw the Father doing. (John 5: 19.) He further taught that all he did among men and for them was for the purpose of making the invisible visible (cf. John 9: 39; Luke 4: 18), and that "the Father abiding in me doeth his works (John 14: 10). His whole desire was to open the eyes of all men, bring them to a new birth, and thereby make it possible for them to participate in that spiritual kingdom which he came to establish; for it was only in that way that they could hope to see the Father. (Matt. 5:8.) There is no other way for life to be redeemed from the despotic pull of the world unto that kind of service which can give it meaning. Or, to state the same thing in another way, it is only in this way that life, as God intended it to be, can be properly realized. We must seek the eternal, if we expect to please God.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What exhortation did Paul give the Colossian Christians?
How is that exhortation related to our lesson for today?
Why are the Lord's people to look beyond the things of time and sense?
How should they regard the things of this world?

The Character of the Message Which Paul Proclaimed

Against what kind of background should we understand the words of Paul in this lesson?
Why was he so severely criticized by some of his Jewish brethren, and especially the Judaizers?
What three things did Paul affirm regarding his ministry?
What does it mean for one to preach himself?
What always happens when men do this?
What does it mean to preach Christ?
Show by example how Paul did this?
What did Paul mean by preaching himself as servants of the Corinthian brethren?
Is this the duty of gospel preachers today? Give reasons for your answer.
What reason did Paul give for not preaching himself?
If God gives the light, what is the Christian's duty regarding it?

What did Paul mean by his statement regarding the "face" of Jesus Christ?

The Source of the Power Which Sustained Him

What did Paul mean by "this treasure"?
In what sense did they have it in earthen vessels?
How must we learn the truth today?
What was Paul's apparent purpose in speaking of his ministry as he did?
What proof did he mention which shows that the gospel truth is from God?
Why do the people of our day so often shy away from the unattractive in the teachers of the truth?
Give some examples to show the folly of this kind of practice?
For what should churches look when they seek teachers to work with them?
What great spirit actuated Paul in his preaching?
Show how the same principle is applicable to us.
What great encouragement did Paul receive for his efforts in his ministry?

The Reason for His Great Optimism

What did Paul mean by saying that they did not faint?
Why could he endure so much suffering in his work as a minister of Christ?
Upon what did he place the emphasis?
What great example did he have in this respect?
Show how all of this should encourage us?
When can we be sure that life has its true meaning?

Lesson IV—October 27, 1963

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Lesson Text

2 Cor. 5: 1-11

1 For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens.

2 For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven:

3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

4 For indeed we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but that we would be clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life.

5 Now he that wrought us for this very thing is God, who gave unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

6 Being therefore always of good courage, and knowing that, whilst we

are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord

7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight);

8 We are of good courage, I say, and are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord.

9 Wherefore also we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto him.

10 For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he hath done, whether *if* be good or bad.

11 Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest unto God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (Phil. 1:

21.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Cor. 5: 12-21.

Daily Bible Readings

October 21.	M.....	Temple of God and Altar (Rev. 12: 1-3)
October 22.	T.....	The New Jerusalem (Rev. 21: 1-5)
October 23.	W.....	Description of the City (Rev. 21: 6-27)
October 24.	T.....	River of Life (Rev. 22: 1-5)
October 25.	F.....	Reward of Righteous (Matt. 25: 31-40)
October 26.	S.....	Incarnate Body (1 Cor. 15: 35-49)
October 27.	S.....	Incarnate Body (1 Cor. 15: 35-49)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Somewhere in Macedonia.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

Hope is one of the fundamental doctrine of the Bible, and is one of the three great principles or graces which Paul says continues. “But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.” (1 Cor. 13: 13.) Hope therefore is one of the basic elements of Christian character; and it is entirely proper to refer to it as belonging to the very heart of our salvation. Paul also says that we are saved by hope (Rom. 8: 24), and in Heb. 6: 19 we learn that hope is the anchor of the soul. Not only are we saved by hope, so far as the salvation of our souls is concerned; it is also wholly impossible for any person to live a normal life even in this world without hope. Thomas Campbell, the poet, sang,

Auspicious hope! in thy sweet garden
 grow
 Wreaths for each toil, a charm for
 every woe.

Someone has observed that the lack of hope in one's life is not a natural weakness; it is, rather, the result of a deep estrangement from Christ. It is utterly impossible for one to please God or be happy without hope. The principal ingredients of hope are (1) *expectation*—the outlook of the soul as opposed to the inlooking; the looking away to some person or good; (2) *desire*—one may expect something and dread it; but when expectation is coupled with desire, then he wants it; (3) *anticipating*—the bringing of the distant and the future near; living in the future, as it were, before it comes; seeing things as they will be, and not merely as they are.

Linguists tell us that the word “hope” is from a root which signifies the opening of the eyes, and that it has a close family relationship with the term “gape” which describes the opening of the mouth. With these two related ideas in mind, it is fairly easy to get two very suggestive pictures which may help us to get the basic meaning of the word *hope*. One is that of a little child standing on tip-toe with wide-open eyes, in evident and eager expectation of some wonderful sight, and with all of its nature thrilled with interest and excitement. The other picture is that of a cozy nest of newly hatched birds, with upturned and opened beaks, waiting for the morsels of food which the parent-birds are bringing to them.

These two pictures, when viewed by thoughtful people, indicate the attitude of those who look and wait in anticipation for that which the gospel has to offer those who are obedient to it. In the words of another, it is the attitude of expectant forelook, of confident waiting, of awakened desire which leaps toward an assured satisfaction. And it is safe to say that there is no more sustaining and transforming influence on human life, than the influence of hope. If a man has hope that his weary struggle will end in something better, that the battle will result in victory, that from the surgical operation a healthier and more satisfying life will emerge, then he has an asset which will very likely bring him through his ordeal. And of all the realms in which this virtue

is indispensable, the spiritual is the chief. The spirit of hope is absolutely essential, if success is to be

achieved. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in Jehovah, and whose trust Jehovah is." (Jer. 17:7.)

The Golden Text

"For to me to live is Christ, and die is gain." Williams renders this verse in these words: "For to me living means Christ and dying brings gain." This is to say, "Whatever life may mean to others, to me it means Christ." So far as Paul was concerned, there was no thought of life apart from Christ. When he wrote to the Galatians, he said, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me." (Gal. 2: 20.) Not only did Paul feel this way himself, he taught other Christians to manifest the same attitude. "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. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory." (Col. 3: 1-4.)

In her book, *Daniel Deronda*, George Eliot says, "What makes life dreary is the want of motive," and it requires no great effort on our part to see that such is the truth. A life without motive would be both insipid and wearisome. But any one who studies the life of Paul will immediately see that there was never a

dull moment with him; for he always did that which he believed was right. (Cf. Acts 23: 1; 24: 16.) His life as a Jew was cheerfully given on what he believed was service to God; but when he met Christ on the Damascus road, the direction of his life was changed; and from that time onward he had only one aim in mind, namely, to glorify Christ—"according to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing shall I be put to shame, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death." (Phil. 1: 20.)

Both Jesus and Paul taught God's people to look upon death as a sleep (cf. John 11: 11-13; 1 Thess. 4: 13-18), but Paul goes a step further and asserts that death is a gain. This is true because the death of the body is necessary before our union with Christ is consummated. To be with and to live in the closest fellowship with Christ in the home of the Father will be the greatest possible reward. "For which cause I suffer also these things: yet I am not ashamed; for I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day." (2 Tim. 1: 12.) Paul and all faithful Christians who have committed, that is, entrusted, their all to the Lord will collect the profits on their investments when this life is over. (Cf. 2 Tim. 4: 6-8.)

The Text Explained

The Basis of Our Hope for the
Future
(2 Cor. 5: 1-4)

For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. In discussing the persecutions, tribulations, and hardships which characterized his and his fellow laborers' ministry, Paul had manifested a spirit of optimism; and in the closing paragraph of the preceding chapter, he gave the rea-

son for that hopeful outlook: "Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Cor. 4: 16-18.)

If there were no hope, there would be no optimism; for optimism pro-

ceeds upon the assumption that good will ultimately triumph over evil. Webster defines optimism as "an inclination to put the most favorable construction upon actions and happenings, minimize adverse aspects, conditions, and possibilities, or anticipate the best possible outcome; a cheerful and hopeful temperament." Christian optimism does not ignore nor belittle the disorder and evil which exist in the world. The Christian optimist is not blind to the realities which are found all around him. He freely concedes that things are not as they should be; but, following the lead of Paul, he is willing to postpone sentence upon the facts until the time when an intelligent judgment will be possible. (Cf. Rom. 8: 28.)

The spirit of hopefulness which has just been described was Paul's philosophy of life, and the first section of our lesson text for today was intended to illustrate it. This is made certain by the term "for" which connects the closing part of 2 Cor. 4 with the first part of 2 Cor. 5. The apostle was not primarily concerned with the continuation of his fleshly body—"the earthly house of our tabernacle" (cf. Phil. 1: 19-26); his primary aim was to receive the "building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens." And so, with this kind of attitude, the things which are seen, whether pleasant or unpleasant, were only for the moment; that which really counts could not be seen with the natural eye, for it was anchored to the future. (Cf. Rom. 8: 24, 25.)

This hopeful outlook was not confined to Paul and the early Christians, but is the common lot of all faithful followers of Christ. Those who are filled with this Christian optimism are, by their faith and consequent life, continuously bearing witness to the power and grace of God which are theirs in both good times and bad. (Cf. Isa. 26: 3, 4.) They are full of hope, when situations seem hopeless; for it is then that they are compelled to draw upon the spiritual resources of the Christian faith. Christian optimism is not merely wishful thinking or an effort to escape the reality of conditions as they are. It is, rather, the facing of unpleasant and evil situations with

courage and hopefulness, because of the knowledge ("we know") which belongs to Christians through their faith in Jesus, (cf. Heb. 6: 19, 20.)

For verily in this we groan, longing to the clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For indeed we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but that we would be clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life.

The kind of "groaning" mentioned here by Paul was also referred to by him in Rom. 8: 18-23. It all came about as a result of the sin of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward. For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only so, but ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." (Cf. Rom. 8: 26, 27.)

It has already been pointed out that Paul did not object to suffering for the cause of Christ, but it is a fact, expressed by him often, that he longed to go and be with Jesus. Lipscomb notes that "Christians are waiting for the redemption of their bodies from mortality and suffering. Their redemption in Christ will not be completed until their bodies are raised from the dead and glorified and are become like Jesus in his glorified and immortal state. Paul has in these verse (Rom. 8: 18-23) presented to us the far-reaching and appalling results of sin, and has given us a picture of the future glorious state that shall come to men and earth when the deliverance from sin is completed. The earth will rejoice and be glad as well as man." Paul's

language in the verses just quoted may be regarded as an inspired commentary on the portion of the lesson text now under consideration. The "naked" state to which the apostle refers is to that of the disembodied spirit. Paul did not want to be found in that condition, but rather with the spiritual body which God has for his glorified people. (Cf. 1 Cor. 15: 35ff.)

God's Plan and Its Consequences

(2 Cor. 5: 5-8)

Now he that wrought us for this very thing is God, who gave unto us the earnest of the Spirit. This is to say that the longing for the heavenly state, along with the spiritual body, was not a groundless desire; for we are placed in that position by God himself. Furthermore, as Williams notes, "to guarantee my faith and hope as well-founded he has given me the Spirit as the first installment of bliss in my house eternal in heaven." The "earnest of the Spirit" is the same as the Spirit as an earnest; the expressions are appositional. (Cf. 2 Cor. 1: 22; Eph. 1: 13, 14.) We learn from Acts 5: 32 that God gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey him, which means that the presence of Holy Spirit in the Christian is proof that God is pleased with him; and that the promises which he has made to him will surely be fulfilled, if the godly life is continued. An "earnest" is sometimes referred to as a partial payment of the total obligation; or, to state the same thing in other words, it is a pledge that full payment will be made. (Cf. 2 Cor. 1: 20-22.)

Being therefore always of good courage, and knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord (for we walk by faith, not by sight); we are of good courage, I say, and are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord.

The confidence which Paul expresses in the verses just quoted is a continuation of that voiced in verse 1 of our lesson text. He understood God's will and intention regarding his people, and possessing the Spirit as a guarantee of the fulfillment of all the promises which he had made to his children, the apostle had every reason to be confident of the future.

To be "at home in the body" is to be alive in the flesh; and that, in turn, means to be absent from the Lord in the glorified state. (Read again Phil. 1: 21-24.) The parenthetical statement of verse 7 is rendered by Williams in these words: "for here I live by what I believe and not by what I see." The two "elements" which make up our faith are *conviction* and *confidence*; and when people walk by faith, they are convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures of the reality of things not seen, and they have confidence regarding the truthfulness of that which God has said about them. (See Rom. 10: 17; Heb. 11: 1, 6.)

The Solemn Convictions Which Impelled Paul's Ministry

(2 Cor. 5: 9-11)

Wherefore also we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto him. For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Verses 9, 10 are rendered by Philipps in this way: "It is our aim, therefore, to please him, whether we are 'at home' or 'away.' For every one of us will have to stand without pretense before Christ our judge, and we shall be rewarded for what we did when we lived in our bodies, whether it was good or bad." It is said that someone once asked Daniel Webster what was the most solemn thought which ever entered his mind, and he promptly replied by saying, "the fact that he must stand in the presence of God and be judged for that which he did while here upon the earth." When people are properly informed regarding the truth of a proposition, there are few things which will affect their standing before God more than the motives which prompt their actions. Consider the following: "Men are more accountable for their motives, than for anything else." (Archibald Alexander.) "In the eyes of that Supreme Being to whom our whole internal frame is uncovered, motives and dispositions hold the place of action." (Hugh Blair.) Anyone who will read Matt. 5: 27, 28; 1 John 3: 15 will be able to see how the Lord regards motives.

These things should enable us to see why Paul attached so much importance to the question of motives. He was convinced that all men must stand in the presence of God and be judged according to their lives while here upon the earth; and with that truth ever before him, he made it his aim to please God. The marginal reading of "make it our aim" is *we are ambitious*. (Cf. Rom. 15:20; 1 Thess. 4: 11, the only other places in the New Testament where the original word is found.) Vincent says that the correct sense of the term is "to prosecute as a point of honor." Paul loved the honorable, and what he said here was particularly appropriate as he made his defense of his ministry. That which he said justified his action, and it should have been a warning to his enemies; for when all men have such a motive before them, they cannot remain separated in their teaching and practice for long.

The word "for" connects verses 9 and 10, and it is easy to see that the fact of the judgment is sufficiently potent to cause any person who "loves the honorable" to make every effort to please God. Some one has called the idea of a judgment the first principle of religion. It is involved in both revelation and conscience. The Old Testament conception of Jehovah as Judge is affirmed over and over again; but it is only when we turn to the New Testament that the essence of the question is fully made known. (Cf. Acts 17: 30, 31.) Thus, not only does the New

Testament reaffirm the doctrine of a final judgment; it also unfolds the principle of it, which is summed up in Christ. (See John 5: 22, 23.) But this judge is unlike any other who ever sat upon a judgment-seat; for he is both Judge and the Standard of Judgment, and his authority and his law are one.

Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest unto God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences. In commenting on this verse, McGarvey and Pendleton make this observation: "Knowing therefore what reason there is to fear displeasing God, we do not court his displeasure by abandoning our ministry because men misjudge and slander us, nor by letting our ministry lose its force and power through our indifference to the good opinion of men concerning us; but, on the contrary, we continue in our ministry, and patiently persuade our opponents of our sincerity and integrity when we assert (verse 9) that our sole ambition is to please God. But we do not need to persuade God in this matter, for our hearts are known and manifest to him, and I trust that they are also in like manner manifest to you by reason of this apology which you have caused me to make." The truth and a good conscience are powerful weapons in opposing error; and it is always proper to try to persuade men, for there is indeed a great day coming.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What can you say of the subject of "hope" from the standpoint of the teaching of the Bible?
Why should we study such a subject often?
How do you account for the lack of hope in the lives of some people?
What are the principal ingredients of hope?
Discuss the root meaning of the term "hope."
What can you say of hope from the standpoint of a motive for action?

The Golden Text

Why did living mean "Christ" to Paul?
In what sense was death to him gain?
How do these thoughts fit in with the general idea of motives?

The Basis of Our Hope for the Future

Discuss the setting of this section of our lesson text for today.
Why could Paul be so optimistic in the face of hardships and persecutions?
Why should all Christians feel as Paul did in this respect?
Why are so many of the Lord's people not optimistic?
Give a practical definition of Christian optimism.
What "groaning" did Paul have reference to in the passage now before us?
Is *groaning* of this sort characteristic of all faithful Christians? Give reason for your answer.
What did Paul mean by the "naked state"?
What provision has the Lord made for avoiding such a condition?

God's Plan and Its Consequences

What plan did God make for his people, as revealed in the text now before us?
What is the "earnest of the Spirit?"

What confidence did Paul express as a result of that which God does for his people?
 In what sense are those who are at home in the body absent from the Lord?
 What does Paul mean by saying that we walk by faith?
 What are the "elements" of faith?
 What, then, does it mean for one to live by faith?
 Why can't people please God without faith?

Why are motives so important in the lives of people?
 How can "convictions" impel a life?
 Why did Paul attach so much importance to motives?
 What did he mean by saying that he made it his aim to please God?
 Why must all men appear before the judgment-seat of Christ?
 What effect should this thought have on people?
 What was Paul's motive for persuading men?
 How did all of this fit in with Paul's defense of his ministry?
 Show why truth and a good conscience are powerful weapons in opposing error.
 What motive should prompt us in persuading men?

The Solemn Convictions Which Impelled Paul's Ministry

What is the most solemn thought which ever entered your mind? Think, and give a reason for your answer.

Lesson V—November 3, 1963

EFFECTS OF AN EARLIER EPISTLE

Lesson Text

2 Cor. 7: 5-16

5 For even when we were come into Mac-e-do'-ni-a our flesh had no relief, but *we were* afflicted on every side; without *were* fightings, within *were* fears.

6 Nevertheless he that comforteth the lowly, *even* God, comforted us by the coming of Ti'-tus;

7 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.

8 For though I made you sorry with my epistle, I do not regret it: though I did regret it (for I see that that epistle made you sorry, though but for a season),

9 I now rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye were made sorry unto repentance; for ye were made sorry after a godly sort, that ye might suffer loss by us in nothing.

10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, *a repentance* which bringeth no regret: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

11 For behold, this selfsame thing, that ye were made sorry after a

godly sort, what earnest care it wrought in you, yea what clearing of yourselves, yea what indignation, yea what fear, yea what longing, yea what zeal, yea what avenging! In everything ye approved yourselves to be pure in the matter.

12 So although I wrote unto you, I *wrote* not for his cause that did the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered the wrong, but that your earnest care for us might be made manifest unto you in the sight of God.

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.

Golden Text.—"I write not these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children." (1 Cor. 4: 14.)

Devotional Reading.—2 Cor. 7: 1-4.

Daily Bible Readings

- October 28. M. Sinful Condition in Corinth (1 Cor. 5: 1-6)
- October 29. T. Information from Chloe (1 Cor. 10-17)
- October 30. W. Carnality in Corinth (1 Cor. 3: 1-8)

October 31. T..... Unbrotherly Conduct (1 Cor. 6: 1-11)
 November 1. F..... Paul Wrote with Tears (2 Cor. 2: 1-4)
 November 2. S..... Letter Effective (2 Cor. 2: 5-10)
 November 3. S..... Paul Would Not Spare Them (2 Cor. 13: 1-10)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Somewhere in Macedonia.

PERSONS.—Paul, Titus, and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

Anyone who will thoughtfully consider all the facts in the case will certainly be driven to the conclusion that Second Corinthians, as we now have the book, is unique in its character, when compared with the other epistles of Paul. The correspondence which passed between Paul and the church in Corinth is the longest which the apostle had with any church of his day, so far as the record is concerned; and it is certainly among the most interesting. It was pointed out in an earlier lesson that there is strong evidence that Second Corinthians, as we now have it, is in reality a composite epistle, that is, that it is made up of two or more epistles which Paul wrote to those brethren, and which were later brought together and published as if they had only been one. This in no way detracts from the fact of inspiration or from the truth which they set forth. We know, for example, that Romans, which is listed in our New Testament as the first of a group of epistles which Paul wrote, was not first in the order of their writing, as may be easily seen by reading the Book of Acts. And if the epistles of Paul were gathered together and published out of their chronological order, it should not seem strange that the men who gathered them together would take two or more of the shorter letters and publish them as one, even to the extent of arranging them in the reverse order of their writing.

There is no evidence that Paul and the other New Testament writers intended that their letters and historical records should be published in book form at a later date. All of these inspired writers were dead long before the collection of their writ-

ings was published. The churches and individuals who received the letters of Paul and others evidently treasured them and no doubt read them often; and then later on, apparently sometime in the second century of the Christian era, the effort to collect them and bring them together was made, and they were finally published and came to be called the New Testament. This is an interesting and thrilling story, and any one who will consider the facts in connection with it, will find the exercise both pleasant and profitable. The more we know about Paul's letters, the more we will appreciate them.

As already indicated, the correspondence which passed between Paul and the Corinthian brethren is the longest on record, so far as the New Testament record is concerned; and the following appears to be the order of it: (1) Paul's letter which is referred to in 1 Cor. 5: 9 and which may be preserved, in part at least, in 2 Cor. 6: 14-7: 1. (2) The letter which the Corinthians wrote to Paul, mentioned in 1 Cor. 7: 1. (3) Paul's reply to their communication—our First Corinthians. (4) Paul's letter of stern reproof—the painful letter—to the Corinthians, our Second Corinthians, chapters 10-13. This is the letter which is referred to in 2 Cor. 2: 4, 9; 7: 8. (5) The letter of reconciliation—our Second Corinthians, chapters 1-9, with the possible exception of 2 Cor. 6: 14-7: 1, as already noted. The letter of reconciliation was written by Paul in response to the favorable report which Titus brought to him from Corinth. But more about this in the body of our lesson for today.

The Golden Text

"I write not these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children." This verse can best

be understood in the light of the preceding paragraph: "Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure trans-

ferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written; that no one of you be puffed up for the one against the other. For who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? but if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it. Already ye are filled, already ye are become rich, ye have come to reign without us: yea and I would that ye did reign, that we also might reign with you. 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. 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. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and we toil, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, the ofscouring of all things, even until now." (1 Cor. 4: 6-13.)

Beginning with 1 Cor. 1: 10 and going through chapter 4, Paul discusses and condemns the partisan strife which then existed in the Corinthian church. "For it hath been signified unto me concerning you, my brethren, by them that are of the household of Cloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I mean, that each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Appollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ." This sinful condition was one of the major disorders into which the Corinthian church had fallen; and that which Paul said in the first four chapters of First Corinthians was intended to correct it. During the course of this discussion, he sometimes appealed to their reason, he sometimes pleaded with them as with children; and then, as in the instance of the passage which was quoted above, he employed the most biting and withering sarcasm. But he hastened to assure the offending brethren that he was not writing as he did for the purpose of shaming them, but to admonish them as his beloved children. Ironic utterances will sometimes bring people to their senses, when other methods of expression fail.

The Text Explained

The Comfort Which the Coming of Titus Brought (2 Cor. 7: 5-7)

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. 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.

Paul also apparently refers to these distressing conditions in 2 Cor. 2: 12, 13: "Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ, and when a door was opened unto me in the Lord, I had no relief for my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went forth into Macedonia." When all the facts are considered, it is evident that Paul's "sorrowful letter" to the Corinthians (chapters

10-13) was written from Ephesus within a comparatively short time after he had sent our First Corinthians; and it was probably sent to Corinth by the hand of Titus, who was also doubtless expected to reinforce the letter with his own efforts, reasoning with them and endeavoring to bring them to their proper sense in their attitude toward Paul. Titus was also expected to bring Paul a report regarding the effect which this "painful letter" had on the Corinthians. (Read again 2 Cor. 2: 12, 13; 7: 5-7.)

It is also evident from the passages just cited Paul's plans for leaving Ephesus and his rendezvous with Titus in Troas were agreed upon before Titus left for Corinth with the "sorrowful letter." It appears, however, that Paul's departure from Ephesus was hastened by the tumult which resulted from the activities of Demetrius, a silversmith, and his fellow craftsmen. (See Acts 19: 21-20: 1.) Having found it advisable therefore to leave Ephesus prematurely.

Paul evidently went directly to Troas, where he expected to meet Titus; but when he reached Troas he had no relief for his spirit, because he did not find Titus there. He did, however, find a door of opportunity opened unto him in the Lord; but he was unable to take full advantage of it, because of his great disappointment in not hearing from Corinth through Titus. This is further evidence of the great distress which the writing of the "sorrowful letter" caused Paul (2 Cor. 2: 1-4). The feeling of uncertainty when he failed to hear from the Corinthians through Titus appears to have caused Paul to suffer "all the sickness of hope deferred."

Leaving Troas, Paul went forth into Macedonia, and his first stop was probably at Philippi; but if not there, then probably at Thessalonica or Berea. Wherever the place was, Titus likely met him there, and the report which he had from Corinth was most encouraging. This accounts for the *comfort* which Paul refers to in the passage now under consideration, and the thanksgiving which he expressed in 2 Cor. 2: 14ff. And it is almost certain that Paul immediately wrote his "letter of reconciliation" (2 Cor., chapters 1-9) from the place where Titus met him with the good news from Corinth. That is why it is said that this portion of Second Corinthians was written from "somewhere in Macedonia."

There are few blessings which bring greater joy to the faithful child of God than that which comes from reconciliation, when the sin and misunderstanding which have divided friends and brethren have been removed. Example after example of this is set forth in the Bible; and it matters not what may have caused the estrangement, those who want to do right are never satisfied until peace has been restored. This is true, whether God or man is involved. God gave his Son that man might be reconciled to him, and many faithful children of God have sacrificed much that that which separated them from others might be removed. Someone has said that reconciliation is harmony, agreement, atonement, and that nothing else satisfies either God or man. Punishment can never satisfy either the holiness of God or the

conscience of man. Divine holiness can be satisfied only with holiness and man can have peace only when enmity has been removed. (Cf. Psalm 17: 15; Luke 15: 11-24.) When all of this is duly considered, it is easy to see why Paul experienced such great joy when the Corinthian brethren changed their attitude toward him. They were his children in the Lord, but they had turned their backs upon him and had followed the lead of his enemies; but after the "sorrowful letter" had done its work, peace and harmony were restored, and there was great rejoicing.

An Evaluation of the "Sorrowful Letter" (2 Cor. 7: 8-12)

For though I made you sorry with my epistle, I do not regret it: though I did regret it (for I see that that epistle made you sorry, though but for a season), I now rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye were made sorry unto repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly sort, that ye might suffer loss by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, a repentance which bringeth no regret; but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold, this selfsame thing, that ye were made sorry after a godly sort, what earnest care it wrought in you, yea what clearing of yourselves, yea what indignation, yea what fear, yea what longing, yea what zeal, yea what avenging! In everything ye proved yourselves to be pure in the matter.

It is clear from 2 Cor. 2: 4 and 7: 8 that Paul did write a letter to the Corinthians which may be described as a "painful" or "sorrowful" letter; and anyone who will take the time to read our First Corinthians carefully will easily see that that epistle cannot be accurately described by these terms. It is a letter which condemns division and wrongdoing; but it is not a letter which tends to break the spirit of rebellious brethren. It appears quite certain that the factious spirit which existed in Corinth was intensified when they received our First Corinthians, with the result that practically the whole church turned against Paul. This was the situation which so greatly disturbed

Paul, but he was in no mood to give up in defeat, or to rest under the slander of his enemies in Corinth. Instead, he resolved to write another letter, and thereby make a supreme effort to regain his lost leadership, while bringing the Corinthian to repentance. This letter, if our analysis is correct, is that which we know as the last four chapters of Second Corinthians.

The chief characteristics of the letter now under consideration (2 Cor., chapters 10-13) is Paul's boldness; for instead of apologizing for himself, he boasts and glories in his authority, his endowments, and his achievements. He fairly overwhelms them with a torrent of burning and withering words, as he registers his indignant resentment at their persistent misconstructions of his motives. He plainly tells them that his authority is quite equal to any demands which they can put upon it; and that in the exercise of his authority, as the apostle to the Gentiles, he can, without stretching it, exercise it over them. He ironically refers to the "sham apostles" and declares that he is not a whit behind the very chiefest of them. But his whole motive in writing this letter was to plead for their unity and perfection in the Lord. (See 2 Cor. 13: 11.)

When Paul told the Corinthians that they had repented, he was speaking about one of the basic doctrines regarding sin and salvation. He was glad that they were brought to repentance, and was thankful that he employed the means necessary to that end, that is, the "sorrowful letter;" but he regretted the necessity for writing it. The word "repent" is a translation of the Greek verb *metanoeo*, which means "to change one's mind" (Thayer); "to have another mind" (Young); "to think differently or afterwards, i.e., reconsider." (Strong.) Our English word "repentance" is a translation of the Greek noun *metanoia*. Repentance answers to the Latin *resipisco*, which means to recover one's senses, to come to himself. This idea, as illustrated in the case of the prodigal son (Luke 15: 17a), expresses the true and real meaning of sin. Sin is lunacy; and every sinner is a moral lunatic. He is beside himself, is not

acting like his true self; but is under the influence and control of another, namely, sin and Satan.

Repentance is not forsaking sin; that is the result of repentance. It is, rather, to have another mind regarding sin, to think differently about it, to reconsider. It implies a true knowledge of sin, a conviction of sin, with its guilt, condemnation, and terrible consequences. It means that the sinner changes his mind regarding sin, and his attitude toward it. As stated by Paul in the text now under consideration, repentance is produced by godly sorrow, that is, sorrow for sin as an offense against God (cf. Rom. 2: 4), and results in a reformation of life (Matt. 3: 8). A reformation of life implies that the penitent's manner of living, in so far as it is wrong, be changed with reference to God. Christ, his fellow men, and himself, to the *extent of his ability*. This fact accounts for the action of the Corinthians, as stated by Paul in verse 11: "For behold, this selfsame thing, that ye were made sorry after a godly sort, what earnest care it wrought in you, yea what clearing of yourselves, yea what indignation, yea what fear, yea what longing, yea what zeal, yea what avenging! In everything ye approved yourselves to be pure in the matter."

So although I wrote unto you, I wrote not for his cause that did the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered the wrong, but that your earnest care for us might be made manifest unto you in the sight of God.

Some expositors seek to identify the offender of the passage just quoted as the incestuous son of 1 Cor. 5: 1, and the offended as the father; but that can hardly be done without straining a point. There is nothing said about the father's being alive at the time the son married his wife, and neither is there any indication that that sin was a personal wrong against Paul. But Paul said that he wrote the letter in question "that your earnest care for us might be made manifest unto you in the sight of God." And again, "But to whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also: for what I also have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, for your sakes have I forgiven it in the presence of Christ; that no advantage may be gained over us by Satan: for

we are not ignorant of his devices." (2 Cor. 2: 10, 11; read also verses 5-9.)

These facts make it quite clear that there was a personal enemy of Paul's who had led the Corinthians into sin, and encouraged them in rebellion against his authority; and that man is clearly identified in 2 Cor. 11: 4. "For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or if ye receive a different spirit, which ye did not receive, or a different gospel, which ye did not accept, ye do well to bear with him." This was evidently the Judaizing teacher who had led the opposition against Paul and made the insulting attack upon his character. It is a fact, capable of demonstration, that Paul dealt with such opposition and replied to such an attack in the last four chapters of our Second Corinthians; and it appears that that letter, comprising those four chapters, had the desired effect in bringing the Corinthians to their senses. "In everything ye approved yourselves to be pure in the matter." Paul had the same problem to deal with in Corinth, which he later had in Galatia. (Cf. Gal. 1: 6-9.)

The Realization of Paul's Hopes
(2 Cor. 7: 13-16)

Therefore we have been comforted: and in our comfort we joyed the more exceedingly for the joy of Titus, because his spirit hath been refreshed by you all. 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 Titus was found to be

truth. And his affection is more abundantly toward you, while he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him. I rejoice that in everything I am of good courage concerning you.

This last statement would certainly seem strange, if chapters 10-13 were written after it, that is, if the whole of Second Corinthians, as we now have it, was a single letter, addressed to the church in Corinth. It will not do to say that the first nine chapters were addressed mainly to the majority; for Paul addressed it "unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints that are in the whole of Achaia." Nor can it be correctly said that the last four chapters were addressed, in the main, to the minority; for the apostles said, "This is the third time I am coming to you. At the mouth of two witnesses or three shall every word be established. I have said beforehand, and I do say beforehand, as when I was present the second time, so now, being absent, to them that have sinned heretofore, and to all the rest, that, if I come again, I will not spare; seeing that ye seek a proof of Christ that speaketh in me; . . ." (2 Cor. 13: 1-3.)

Titus had carried the painful letter to Corinth, and had witnessed the true penitence of the Corinthian brethren; and that had made a profound impression on him. And when he reported the matter to Paul, when he met him somewhere in Macedonia, the joy of the two knew no bounds. Penitence and joy were the principal effects of Paul's letter to the Corinthians, which we have considered in this lesson.

Questions for Discussion

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

Why did Paul sometimes use ironical language in addressing the brethren?

Introduction

What can you say of the character of our Second Corinthians?

How did Paul's and the other writing of the New Testament come to be published in book form?

Discuss the correspondence which passed between Paul and the Corinthian brethren.

The Golden Text

What "things" did Paul have in mind when he wrote the words of the golden text?

Why say that he was not writing to shame them, but to admonish them?

The Comfort Which the Coining of Titus Brought

What was the cause of the great distress to which Paul referred in this section of our lesson?

What was the role which Titus had in these matters?

Discuss the probable movements of Paul and Titus up to the time of this lesson.

Why didn't Paul take advantage of the opportunity to preach Christ in Troas?

Why did he leave Troas and go into Macedonia?

Where did Titus probably meet him?

What was the effect of that meeting?

What did Paul probably do almost immediately?
 Why does the reconciliation of brethren bring such great joy to those involved?
 Why do so many people fail to see the importance of being reconciled to each other?

An Evaluation of the "Sorrowful Letter"
 What was this sorrowful letter and why was it written?
 What are the chief characteristics of this letter?
 Why is the subject of repentance so important?
 What is the basic meaning of the term "repent"?
 Illustrate its meaning.
 How is repentance brought about?
 What is the meaning of "godly sorrow"?
 What is the result of repentance?

What were the results in the case of the Corinthians?
 Who was probably the offender who had caused so much trouble?
 How did he fit into the letter which Paul wrote?
 How were the Corinthians affected by the letter?

The Realization of Paul's Hopes
 What does verse 16 of our lesson text clearly indicate?
 How do we know that Paul addressed his writings to the Corinthians to "all" of them?
 What effect did the penitence of the Corinthians have on Titus?
 How did both he and Paul react to their action?
 What, then, were the principal effects of Paul's letter which we have considered in this lesson?

Lesson VI—November 10, 1963

THE GREAT CONTRIBUTION

Lesson Text

1 Cor. 16: 1-4; 2 Cor. 8: 1-11

1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I gave order to the churches of Ga-la-ti-a, so also do ye.

2 Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come.

3 And when I arrive, whomsoever ye shall approve, them will I send with letters to carry your bounty unto Je-ru'-sa-lem:

4 And if it be meet for me to go also, they shall go with me.

1 Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God which hath been given in the churches of Mac-e-do'-ni-a;

2 How that in much proof of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

3 For according to their power, I bear witness, yea and beyond their power, they gave of their own accord,

4 Beseeching us with much entreaty in regard of this grace and the fellowship in the ministering to the saints:

5 And *this*, not as we had hoped, but first they gave their own selves to the Lord, and to us through the will of God.

6 Inasmuch that we exhorted Titus, that as he had made a beginning before, so he would also complete in you this grace also.

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.

Golden Text.—"It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20: 35.)
 Devotional Reading.—1 Cor. 16: 10-18.

Daily Bible Readings

November 4. M. Giving on First Day of Week (1 Cor. 16: 1, 2)
 November 5. T. For Poor Saints in Jerusalem (Rom. 15: 22-29)

November 6. W. Another Example of Benevolence (Acts 11: 27-30)
 November 7. T. Duty of Needy (Gal. 6: 1-10; James 1: 27)
 November 8. F. Obligation of the Church (1 Tim. 5: 1-16)
 November 9. S. Messengers of the Churches (2 Cor. 8: 16-24)
 November 10. S. Example of Achaia and Macedonia (2 Cor. 9: 1-5)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Somewhere in Macedonia.

PERSONS.—Paul, Titus, and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

It appears from the record of the ministry of Paul that he was always interested in relieving the needs of the poor. "Now in these days there came down prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be a great famine over all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius. And the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren that dwelt in Judaea: which also they did, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul." (Acts 11: 27-30.) And then later on, at the Jerusalem conference, the three apostles who commended Paul and Barnabas for the work among the Gentiles urged only one thing upon them, namely, that they "should remember the poor;" and Paul added, "which very thing I was also zealous to do." (See Gal. 2: 1-10.)

We do not know just exactly when Paul began to think of the great contribution which he saw through to its conclusion; but we do know that it was prominent in his mind during his second missionary journey, which began soon after the conference in Jerusalem. (Cf. 2 Cor. 9: 1, 2.) It was during Paul's third missionary journey that he wrote the four epistles (First and Second Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans) from which the lessons for the second, third, and fourth quarters of this year are taken; and it is from this group of letters that we learn the most of what we know about the collection. (Read, in addition to the lesson text, Rom. 15: 25-29.) For many months Paul, along with other

faithful brethren, had been urging some of the Gentile churches to take up a collection for the needy Jewish Christians in and around Jerusalem. Many of the early Jewish brethren in that city had never been entirely satisfied with the way in which Paul and his co-laborers had offered the gospel to the Gentiles; and the growing strength of the Gentile churches seemed only to increase their suspicion.

Although Paul knew that he was right in his attitude toward the Gentiles, and his ministry had the approval of the other apostles and the leadership of the church, generally speaking, he was, nevertheless, unwilling to allow any of the brethren to feel as they did about the matter, without making an effort to do something about it. It had long been Paul's conviction that the feeling of resentment on the part of the Jewish brethren could, in a large degree at least, be allayed by getting the Gentile brethren to supply funds to relieve the needs of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem and that immediate area. And in keeping with this idea, the Gentile churches of three or four provinces—Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and probably Asia—were uniting their efforts in this endeavor. For nearly two years the brethren in these regions had been setting apart each Lord's day that which they were able to give to this fund. The eighth and ninth chapters of Second Corinthians give us some idea of how Paul encouraged the brethren to vie with each other in this charitable undertaking—a suggestion as to the importance the enterprise had in his mind.

The Golden Text

"It is more blessed to give than to receive." These words form the closing part of Paul's address to the Ephesian elders. He was bringing to a close his third missionary jour-

ney, and was hurrying to Jerusalem with the funds which had been collected by the churches named above for the relief of the poor saints in and around Jerusalem. The apostle

wanted to reach Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. He, of course, wanted to see the Ephesian elders with whom he had worked so long; but inasmuch as their city was off of his route, and in order to save time, he asked the elders there to meet him in Miletus. It was at the latter place that Paul delivered the address to the Ephesian elders which closed with the words of our golden text for today.

We have no way of knowing from what source Paul learned of words of Jesus which he quoted; but we do know that he rescued them from oblivion, and made it possible for them to be available for use by the Lord's people in all subsequent ages of the world. It is also interesting to note that Paul is the only apostle or other inspired writer, outside the four gospel records, who ever made a direct quotation from the Lord; and David Thomas calls attention to three important things which the words reveal regarding Christ and his teaching, namely, (1) The unrecorded portion of his words, which is to say that much of the teaching of the Lord was not recorded, cf. John 20: 30, 31; 21: 25. (2) The

exalted character of his teaching, standing, as it does, in direct contrast with that of the world. (3) The unselfish nature of his life; for the words quoted are but a portrayal of his life.

There are in general two principal views of life, namely, (1) that of gain, and (2) that of service to others. Gain, of course, can be with a view to helping others, but that is not the usual attitude of those whose aim is the acquisition of that which they do not possess. Many people whose desire is to acquire that which they do not possess not only want their gains for themselves, but also for use in making further acquisitions. But the other view aims to use every gift and every opportunity in such a manner as to make them blessings to others. Paul's purpose in quoting the words of Jesus to the Ephesian elders was to encourage them to follow his example of service to their fellow men. That had always been Paul's rule as a Christian; and in following that plan, he was but imitating the example and teaching of Jesus. (Cf. Matt. 20: 28; 1 Thess. 2:7-9. The joy of acquisition for self can never equal the satisfaction of serving others.

The Text Explained

Details Regarding: the Collection

(1 Cor. 16: 1-4)

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I gave order to the churches of Galatia, so also do ye. Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come.

Inasmuch as the church in Corinth had other financial obligations (cf. 1 Cor. 9: 1-14), it is reasonable to assume that other monies were given into the treasury of the church, before the collection which we are to study today was authorized. It has always been the duty of man, serving under God, to provide for the monetary needs of the Lord's work. But over and above these basic obligations, the Lord gives his people the opportunity to demonstrate their love for him and for their fellow men by making extra contributions, such as the one before us at this time. Whether or not Paul's "order" to the Galatian churches was given

orally or in writing is not stated; but whatever may have been the method by which the information was conveyed to those churches, we may be sure that it was substantially the same as the directions contained in the passage now under consideration. (Cf. "so also do ye.")

Five questions regarding the collection are answered in verse 2, namely, (1) *When?* "Upon the first day of the week"—every first day of the week, according to the original. *kata mian sabbatou*. This definitely shows that the early church habitually met for worship on every first day of the week. They no doubt met at other times (cf. Acts 2: 46, 47; Heb. 10: 25), but the first day of the week was the time designated for the collection which Paul was discussing.

(2) *Who?* "Each one of you." Every Christian should have the opportunity of making his own contribution. Whatever the family is able to give should be divided up among them—husband, wife, and children—so each may share in the service, unless var-

ious members of the family have their own individual incomes. It is not proper for the husband, or some other member of the family, to do the giving for all if they are present and are participating in the service.

(3) *What?* "Lay by him in store." In commenting on this, David Lipscomb says, "Some contend that the storing was to be at home, but that would be incompatible with the idea 'that no collections be made when I come,' for if stored at home, it would have to be gathered when he came. It was to be separated at home from the amount not given, then cast into the treasury." (4) *How?* "As he may prosper." There are some professed Christians who try to evade this duty by saying that they do not know how much they have prospered. Such people do not seem to realize the fact that they are impeaching God's wisdom; for that is what *he* said for them to do. Any person who is responsible for earning a livelihood is under obligation to tell the Federal Government about his gains or prosperity; and if he can't do it by himself, he can always find someone to help him. And just so with his giving to the service of God. (Cf. Luke 19: 23.)

When one gives as he has prospered, he gives according to his ability. (See Acts 11: 29; 2 Cor. 8: 12.) If the average man will ask himself just why he is not "able" to give more into the Lord's service than he is giving, and will determine to be true with himself and with God in his answer, it will not be difficult for him to see just what Paul means by giving as one has prospered. To prosper literally means to gain or receive something, and when one gives as he has prospered he gives according to his gains or receipts; and when one does that he gives according to his ability, according to that which he has, and not according to that which he has not. (5) *Why?* "That no collections be made when I come," that is, that sufficient funds may be on hand to meet the needs which may be before the congregation. If congregations and individuals will follow the instruction which Paul gives in the passage now before us, there is little likelihood that they will go very far astray in the matter of their giving to worthy causes. It is just as important for

one to give attention to God's plan for giving, as it is for him to give attention to his plan for saving the lost. (Cf. James 2: 10; 4: 17.)

And when I arrive, whomsoever ye shall approve, them will I send with letters to carry your bounty unto Jerusalem: and if it be meet for me to go also, they shall go with me.

It is interesting to note that Paul recognized and provided for the autonomy of the congregation in the matter of the disposition of the collection which had been made for the poor saints in Jerusalem. It was the church's responsibility to see to it that the money which had been contributed reached its intended destination; but there is no evidence that the Corinthian brethren had any responsibility with reference to the distribution among the needy Christians. This same principle is true with churches today. If a congregation decides to assist needy children or others in a home, the contributing church loses none of its autonomy in making such contributions; for it can give or not give as it chooses, and it can authorize the money to be used for any purpose it desires, or it can request the management of the home to use the money as it sees fit. No congregation ever tells a preacher how to spend the money which it contributes for his support; but the church can give or not give as it sees fit. If the brethren should be convinced that the money is not being used wisely, they can take immediate steps to make whatever corrections they deem best.

The clearest evidence of the importance which Paul attached to the collection which was being made for the needy Judæan brethren is the fact that he deferred his trip to Rome and Spain, in order to go in person with the chosen messengers to carry the money to Jerusalem. (Cf. Rom. 15: 22-28. But Paul implied in the verses now under consideration that it would be left up to the church as to whether or not he would go. But the fact that he was willing to defer his western journey and go with the brethren to take the gift to Jerusalem shows how he felt about the whole enterprise. Not only was there a need for material assistance; there was also a need for the creation of a proper attitude on the part of the recipients of the aid. Paul felt that

the whole success of the effort which was being made would depend upon the interpretation which the bearers put upon the gift when it was delivered in Jerusalem—whether it was just so much cash received, or whether it was a great symbol of fraternal fellowship from the Gentile Christians of the provinces already named. If the wrong interpretation had been placed upon the gift, it certainly would have failed in its conciliatory purpose. The brethren in Corinth must have felt that Paul should accompany their messengers (cf. Acts 24: 17); for who was better prepared to interpret the gift than the man who had planned and directed the whole enterprise, and had seen it through to its finish? Brethren today should carefully study Paul's method as they attempt to meet the needs of the less fortunate; for the "reputation" of the church is at stake.

A Good Example Can Be Inspiring

(2 Cor. 8: 1-6)

Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God which hath been given in the churches of Macedonia; how that in much proof of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For according to their power, I bear witness, yea and beyond their power, they gave of their own accord, beseeching us with much entreaty in regard of this grace and the fellowship in the ministering to the saints: and this, not as we had hoped, but first they gave their own selves to the Lord, and to us through the will of God. Inasmuch that we exhorted Titus that as he had made a beginning before, so he would also complete in you this grace also.

The Macedonian churches about which we know were those in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea; and it is interesting to observe that in no letter which Paul wrote to them (First and Second Thessalonians and Philippians) is there a warning against the temptations and perils of wealth. (Cf. 1 Tim. 6: 10, 17-19.) In commenting on the affliction and poverty of these churches, McGarvey and Pendleton say, "The district of Macedonia had suffered in three civil wars, and had been reduced to such poverty that Tiberius Caesar, heark-

ening to their petitions, had lightened their taxes. But in addition to this general poverty, the churches had been made poor by persecution (2 Thess. 1: 4)). This poverty put their Christian character to the proof, and Paul wishes the Corinthians to know, that they may be benefited by the example, how nobly the Macedonians endured the proof. Despite their afflictions they were so filled with the grace of God that their joy abounded and worked positively in the combination with their abysmal poverty, which worked negatively to manifest the extreme riches of their liberality."

This is enough to show us that it is not necessary for a congregation or an individual to be wealthy, in to be a liberal giver. Not only did the poor brethren of the churches in Macedonia give for the relief of others who were also poor; they gave "of their own accord;" and the giving was to such an extent that Paul, knowing that they were giving beyond their means, evidently sought to restrain them. But instead of lessening their efforts, they besought him with persistent entreaty that they might be allowed to exercise the grace of liberality which God had put into their hearts (cf. Phil. 2: 13) and to have fellowship in so worthy a cause as that of relieving the needs of God's people. The secret of their great liberality is found in the fact that they first gave themselves to God, and then to his messengers through the divine will. When people have the right attitude toward God and his work, there is no problem regarding the means necessary for the fulfillment of his purpose. Inspired by such a great example as that which was set by the Macedonian brethren, Paul urged Titus to return to Corinth and seek to complete the work of gathering an offering from the brethren there, a work which he had previously begun.

The Ruling Principle in Christian Giving

(2 Cor. 8: 7-11)

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. I speak not by way of commandment, but as proving through the earnestness of others the

sincerity also of your love. 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.

In this section of our lesson, Paul speaks of "giving" as a grace or gift of the Spirit. He had told them in his first letter, that is, in our First Corinthians, that they were blessed with spiritual gifts. He names some of them here, and he urges them to add to them the grace of liberality and to make it outstanding among the other gifts by its perfection. Paul does not mean to say that there is no command to give. Anyone who is familiar with the teaching of the Bible is aware of the fact that some of our earnings are God's to begin with. (Cf. 1 Cor. 9: 13, 14.) God has never turned either man's entire time or his possessions over to him; a part has always been reserved for God; and no thoughtful person will contend that we can give God's part. Our giving, such as we have under consideration in this lesson, is from what we have left *after* we have discharged our duty to God and the work which he has authorized us to do. That is the reason such giving must be prompted by love. Sacrifice for the good of others is the meaning of cross-bearing; and it is only in that way that we can be pleasing to God and like Jesus. (Cf. Matt. 16: 24.)

The passage with reference to Christ is one of the great statements of Paul concerning the pre-existent and incarnate state of the Lord Jesus Christ, with which his writings abound. This verse is parenthetical in its nature, and it was introduced in order to give the highest example of love and self-sacrifice for others which is possible. Some expositors

have thought that the expression "he became poor" has reference to our Lord's earthly poverty (cf. Luke 9: 58), but that cannot be the primary meaning; for the poverty of Christ by which we are "made rich" is not the hardship and want of his earthly lot, but the state which he assumed in becoming man. (Cf. Phil. 2: 5ff.) It would be much easier for Christians to give as they should, if they would center their minds on that which Christ did for them.

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

The term "judgment" is used in the sense of opinion or advice, and it was much more in order than a command would be, since the Corinthians were not only the first to make a beginning with reference to the collection, but also did it willingly. It was therefore to their interest that they complete that which they had promised to do. It is probably true that their divided and rebellious condition had slowed up the work of gathering the funds for the needy saints, if it had not caused it to stop entirely; and it was Paul's purpose in giving the advice to urge them to live up to their promise. There are some churches today who would do well to remember the seriousness of doing that this they promised in the way of helping the needy, whether with reference to spreading the gospel or providing food for the hungry. When help is promised it should be forthcoming, or a satisfactory explanation should be made for the failure.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Discuss Paul's record with reference to benevolent work.
Under what circumstances did Paul propose that the collection now under consideration be undertaken?
Where do we get the greater part of our information regarding it?
What great motive was behind the taking of the collection?
Would such a motive be proper for us today under similar conditions? Give reasons for your answer.

The Golden Text

How did Paul come to speak the words of this text?
What three things do these words reveal regarding Jesus and his ministry?
What are the two principal views of life which are generally manifested?
What was Paul's purpose in quoting the words of Jesus?

Details Regarding the Collection

What was the nature of the contribution of this lesson?
What other financial obligations do the Lord's people have with reference to his work?

Under what circumstances, if any, may the Lord's people today make a special contribution?
 Discuss each of the five questions which Paul answers in verse 2 of the text.
 How often should congregations of the Lord's people meet for worship?
 How may one know that he is giving as he has prospered?
 In what way did Paul show his respect for the autonomy of the local church?
 How may a church maintain its autonomy while contributing to a home for needy people?
 In what way did Paul show his special interest in the collection for the needy saints?

A Good Example Can Be Inspiring

Where were the Macedonian churches and what did Paul say regarding them?
 How do you account for a poor church being such a liberal giver?

What use did Paul make of the great example of the churches of Macedonia?
 The Ruling Principle in Christian Giving
 In what sense is benevolent giving a "grace"?
 What did Paul urge the Corinthians to do about this grace?
 Did Paul mean to teach that there is no command for Christians to give? Give reasons for your answer.
 Where does "benevolent giving" begin?
 What use does Paul make of the great example of Jesus?
 What great truths are set forth in that passage (verse 9)?
 What "judgment" did Paul give the Corinthians regarding the collection for the poor saints?
 Why was it necessary for him to say that which he did about it?
 What important lesson should we all learn about keeping the promises we make about helping others?

Lesson VII—November 17, 1963

GIVING, A PROOF OF LOVE

Lesson Text

2 Cor. 9: 1-11

1 For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you:

2 For I know your readiness, of which I glory on your behalf to them of Mac-e-do'-ni-a, that A-cha'-ia hath been prepared for a year past; and your zeal hath stirred up very many of them.

3 But I have sent the brethren, that our glorying on your behalf may not be made void in this respect; that, even as I said, ye may be prepared:

4 Lest by any means, if there come with me any of Mac-e-do'-ni-a and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be put to shame in this confidence.

5 I thought it necessary therefore to entreat the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your aforepromised bounty, that the same might be ready as a matter of bounty, and not of extortion.

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 every-thing, may abound unto every good work:

9 As it is written,
 He hath scattered abroad, he hath given to the poor;
 His righteousness abideth for ever.

10 And he that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for food, shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness:

11 Ye being enriched in every-thing unto all liberality, which worketh through us thanksgiving to God.

Golden TEXT.—"For God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. 9: 7.)

Devotional READING.—2 Cor. 8: 16-24.

Daily Bible Readings

- November 11. M. Lord Loves a Cheerful Giver (2 Cor. 9: 6-16)
- November 12. T. Example of Christ (Acts 20: 34, 35)
- November 13. W. Liberality of Early Church (Acts 2: 43-47)
- November 14. T. Great Unselfishness (Acts 4: 32-35)
- November 15. F. Poor Widow (Luke 21: 1-4)

November 16. S.....Dangers of Riches (Mark 10: 17-22)
 November 17. S.....Promise of Future (Mark 10: 28-31)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Somewhere in Macedonia.

PERSONS.—Paul, certain other brethren, and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

The closing verse of 2 Cor. 8, the chapter from which the last two sections of the preceding lesson were taken, reads as follows: "Show ye therefore unto them in the face of the churches the proof of your love, and our glorying on your behalf." In the paragraph from which this verse is taken, Paul was discussing the work of Titus and those who went with him to Corinth in connection with the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem. The degree of prominence which Titus enjoys in Paul's letters, especially Second Corinthians, is unique. He is mentioned by name nine times in that epistle alone (2: 13; 7: 6, 13, 14; 8: 6, 16, 23; 12:18), and always with marked affection and distinction. No one can read these passages without being impressed with the idea that Titus was evidently one of the most congenial and useful of all of Paul's assistants.

When Paul needed someone to stir up the Corinthian church regarding the contribution which they had promised to make for their Jewish brethren in Judaea, he turned to Titus, and Titus gladly responded to the call. "But thanks be to God, who putteth the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. For he accepted indeed our exhortation; but being himself very earnest, he went forth unto you of his own accord." (2 Cor. 8: 16, 17.) There is every reason for thinking that when Titus had finished his task, Paul could say, "I was not put to shame." Paul gave Titus and the brother who

went with him a very encouraging report concerning the Corinthians, and he was therefore very anxious that the brethren live up to that report.

Giving on the first day of the week is a direct command of the Lord to his people. (See 1 Cor. 16: 2.) No informed Bible student would contend that that is all the giving which Christians may or should engage in; but it is that which they should do when they meet on the Lord's day for worship. The passage just referred to contains Paul's instruction regarding the Lord's day collection, which in this instance was for the poor saints in Judaea, and the reason for it, while the eighth and ninth chapters of Second Corinthians set forth the principles which should govern the Lord's people in carrying out this command.

The importance of this subject cannot be too greatly emphasized; for no one can please the Lord who does not endeavor to follow all the instruction which is given in God's will to his people. (Cf. Matt. 7: 21-23; James 2: 10; 4: 17.) The purpose of this lesson is to point out the principles which should govern Christians in their giving on the first day of the week. Webster defines a principle, as used in this study, as a settled rule of action; a governing law of conduct; a rule of conduct consistently directing one's actions. The New Testament principles of giving, if faithfully followed, will solve the problem of "church finances" and render that feature of Christian service acceptable to God.

The Golden Text

This portion of our lesson is a part of the principal text, and it will be considered in its proper place.

The Text Explained

Confidence Does Not Preclude
 Precautionary Measures
 (2 Cor. 9: 1-5)

For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to

write to you: for I know your readiness, of which I glory on your behalf to them of Macedonia, that Achaia hath been prepared for a year past; and your zeal hath stirred up very

many of them. But I have sent the brethren, that our glorying on your behalf may not be made void in this respect; that, even as I said, ye may be prepared: lest by any means, if there come with me any of Macedonia and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be put to shame in this confidence. I thought it necessary therefore to entreat the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your aforepromised bounty, that the same might be ready as a matter of bounty, and not of extortion.

If there is any further need for proof that Paul wrote this part of Second Corinthians from somewhere in Macedonia, then this section of the lesson text furnishes it. The present tense: "I glory on your behalf to them of Macedonia, . . ." shows that the writing was done in Macedonia, as The Expositor's Greek Testament points out. We learn from Acts 20:

1 and 2 Cor. 2: 12, 13 that Paul left Ephesus, the place from which he had evidently written the "sorrowful letter" to the Corinthians and which was sent to them by Titus; and when he failed to meet Titus in Troas, where a great opportunity for gospel preaching was open to him, he was so troubled that he departed from the latter city, and "went forth into Macedonia," and then after hearing the good news of the penitent state of the Corinthians, he wrote the letter of reconciliation, and concluded it with the plea for the completion of the offering for the poor saints in Jerusalem, the collection of which had probably been interrupted by the deplorable condition in the Corinthian church.

There appears to be a very close connection between the closing verse of chapter eight, and the opening verse of chapter nine. After exhorting the Corinthian brethren to show the brethren whom he was sending to them "the proof of your love, and of our glorying on your behalf," Paul then reminds the Corinthians that there was really no need to write to them regarding the matter in question; but, as Robertson notes, "all the same he does write," and then points out that the writing "ought to be superfluous." Meyer observes that "certainly Paul

has written of the collection both in chapter 8 and again in what follows; and he meant it so, otherwise he would have ended the section with chapter 8. But he delicately makes a rhetorical turn, so that, in order to spare the readers' sense of honor, he seems not to take up the subject again, but to speak only of the sending of the brethren; and he annexes to that what he intends still to insert regarding the matter itself. . . . Probably when he wrote 8: 24 he meant to close the section with it, but—perhaps after reading over chapter 8 again—was induced to add something, which he did in this polite fashion. Hofmann's idea—that recommendation of the collection itself was superfluous, but that there had been delay in carrying it out—is quite in accordance certainly with verses 1-5, but from verse 5 to the end of the chapter there again follow instructions and promises, which belong essentially to the recommendation of the collection itself."

But to say the least of it, Paul did, in a very delicate manner, remind the Corinthian brethren of their lagging responsibility regarding a promise which they had made, but had not showed the interest in it which should have characterized them; while at the same time assuring them that he still had confidence in them. And the fact that he was sending Titus and others to encourage them to complete the work of gathering the offering was, indeed, to their advantage, as well as to his. The motive behind Paul's statement is brought out in Calvin's paraphrase: "I do not tell you that you must minister unto the necessities of the saints; for that were needless; since you well know it, and have practically declared that you would not be wanting to them: but because of my everywhere boasting of your liberality, I have engaged at once my own credit and yours, this will not suffer me to remain inactive."

If we keep in mind the "break" between Paul and the Corinthian church, which necessitated the "painful letter," it will be easier to understand why Paul, after the reconciliation, had to pick up the "broken threads" and skillfully reweave the pattern which characterized the Corinthians when the pledge was first

made "a year past." This appears to be the significance of verses 1-5, and it should be a lesson to us in dealing with similar situations which occasionally arise in our time. It is much better to rebuild the bridge, than to widen the chasm.

Reaping Will Be in Proportion to the
Sowing
(2 Cor. 9: 6-9)

But this I say, He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Let each man do according as he hath purposed in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye, having always all sufficiency in every thing, may abound unto every good work: as it is written,

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

His righteousness abideth for ever.

When one carefully considers the teaching of the New Testament with reference to giving, he will learn that there are some specific motives which should govern Christians in this phase of their service in the Lord's kingdom. (1) The first and highest motive is *the desire to obey God*, Matt. 7: 21; James 2: 10; 4: 17. (2) *As a means of spiritual development*. The giving which the Lord requires is intended as a means of growth and development. Giving up material things in the proper spirit will always result in spiritual growth and spiritual riches. No motive therefore should ever be put before a Christian to induce him to give which would not develop him spiritually, and leave him richer for the giving. (3) *As a proof of love*, 2 Cor. 8: 8, 9, 24; cf. John 14: 21; 1 John 5: 3. (4) *To provide means for carrying on the work which the Lord has ordained for his people to do*, 1 Cor. 9: 13, 14; 16: 2.

As in practically all other instances of doing that which the Lord commands, there is a right way to act and a wrong way. It is important for us to know this in the matter now under consideration; because the inspired writers of the New Testament gave some specific instructions regarding it. God has always been definite in his instructions to those

who worship and serve him. (Cf. John 4: 24.) We know exactly what to do with reference to "church music," eating the Lord's supper, et cetera; and we *can* know what the Lord wants done with respect to giving too.

When we come to consider the question from the negative standpoint, we are told that we must not give (1) *grudgingly*, that is, of sorrow (marginal note) or out of grief, "with a sour, reluctant mind" (Thayer), cf. Deut. 15: 9, 10; 1 John 5: 3. (2) *Of necessity*, that is, compelled to give. (3) *Of extortion*, that is, a gift which betrays the giver's covetousness. A covetous man in one who possesses an avaricious spirit, one who has a greedy desire for more, usually at someone else's expense. (Cf. Col. 3: 5; Gal. 5: 20.) The desire to possess that to which one has no right is not only covetousness; it is robbery as well. (See Mai. 3: 7-10.) A Christian therefore should never try to hold on to, as long as he can, that which should be given in the Lord's service. On the contrary, he should be thankful for the opportunity of doing that which he is able to do.

Turning next to the positive side of the question, there are some principles stated which, if followed, will certainly result in the accomplishment of that which the Lord has authorized. (1) *Give as prospered*, that is, according to one's gain (1 Cor. 16: 2). This is to be done weekly; and if this plan is carried out, no great burden will be felt at any one time. This is what Paul meant when he told the Corinthians to give according to their ability (2 Cor. 8: 11; cf. Mark 14: 8; 12: 41-44). (2) *Stewardship giving*. A steward is one who manages that which belongs to another; and since the Christian and all his possessions belong to God, he must, if he is faithful, give as a steward. (See Luke 16: 10-13; 1 Pet. 4: 10; 1 Cor. 4: 2.)

(3) *Give cheerfully*, that is, be prompt, cheerful, and joyous in giving. (Cf. Rom. 12: 8; Acts 4: 32.) No one, let it be emphasized again, should try to hold on to that which he should give as long as he can. Our giving should be done *weekly*, not "weakly." (4) *Give readily*, that is, in a zealous, eager spirit, or with a ready mind (2 Cor. 8: 11, 12).

This is about the same as giving cheerfully. (5) *Abound in giving*, that is, be pre-eminent or excel in giving (2 Cor. 8: 7). (6) *Give with a purpose*, that is, have an aim in mind and resolve to discharge the obligation growing out of it (2 Cor. 9: 7). The giving which God requires must result from *settled convictions* and a *determined purpose*; not from an *occasional impulse*. There is no place for purposeless and spasmodic giving in the service of Christ.

(7) *Promised or pledged giving*—"your aforepromised bounty" (2 Cor. 9: 5). That Christians should assume a definite obligation, and pledge themselves to discharge that obligation, is the plain implication of the passage just cited. The promise or pledge which the Corinthians made had been before them for a year. (See 2 Cor. 8: 10; 9: 2.) (8) *Equality in giving*, that it, on the principle that the abundance of the one should be made to equalize the difference created by the wants of others (2 Cor. 8: 13, 14). This is the spirit of the Golden Rule; and that rule is applicable in the entire life of a Christian—"All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt. 7: 12). The abundant possessions of the one and the needs of others present a problem, the solution of which not only involves human duty, but human destiny as well. (Cf. Gal. 6: 2; 1 John 3: 17; Matt. 25: 31-46.)

How sweet, how heav'nly is the sight,
When those that love the Lord,
In one another's peace delight,
And so fulfill the word.

When each can feel his brother's sigh,
And with him bear a part;
When sorrow flows from eye to eye,
And joy from heart to heart.

—J. Swain.

In commenting on verse 8 of the section of the lesson text now before us, David Lipscomb says, "This as clearly teaches as any passage in the Old Testament that God bestows temporal blessings under the new dispensation as well as spiritual, and that he does it in response to a free and hearty consecration to the Lord

on our part. All grace here is favor in temporal good, that the Christian having all sufficiency may abound unto every good work. To the Philippians, Paul says: 'I have all things, and abound: I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things that came from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. And my God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.' (Phil. 4: 18, 19.)

"In these things it may be asked: Does God violate his laws to bless his children? Nay, I do not believe God violates his laws to do anything. But his laws are multiform and far-reaching. One law acting alone might produce one result, another law working in harmony with it would greatly modify that result. A law working without prayer or a life of consecration on our part might produce one result, acting in harmony with the influence growing out of prayer and self-sacrifice to God and that result is greatly modified. The prayer and consecration so harmonize with all the laws of God that the working of every law bears blessings to him who prays and consecrates himself to God."

Paul's quotation in verse 9 from Psalm 112: 9 not only confirms the truth that God does give temporal blessings to his people in this dispensation, who are willing to conform to his law of sowing and reaping; it also shows that God himself works in harmony with the principle stated in verse 6 of the passage now under consideration, that is, God sows bountifully, and the result is that his faithful children are able to reap in the same manner. (Cf. Heb. 13: 5, 6.)

God Will Bless Liberal Giving
(2 Cor. 9: 10, 11)

And he that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for food, shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness: ye being enriched in everything unto all liberality, which worketh through us thanksgiving to God.

The original word from which we have "liberality" (*haplotēs*) literally means singleness of heart (cf. Col. 3: 22), sincerity, mental honesty. Our

giving, according to this rule, should be with openness of heart and honesty of mind; not conniving, that is, shutting the eyes or feigning ignorance of what is being done, when our giving is not what it should be. Liberal giving not only "filleteth up the measure of the wants of the saints," or meets whatever other need which may be before the church, "but aboundeth also through many thanksgivings unto God" (2 Cor. 9: 12). This is one way we have of glorifying God for the obedience of our confession unto the gospel of Christ. (See verse 13.) God will as certainly supply that which we will use, as his promise is found in the New Testament. (Cf. 2 Cor. 1: 20.)

The New Testament does not specify a definite amount or percentage which must be given by the Lord's people today, but it does say that "he that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bounti-

fully." Giving under Christ, as already observed, is a test of the giver's love, his love for the Lord and for his fellow men. This, however, does not imply that there is no definite teaching in the New Testament on the question now before us; there is, and "if any man willeteth to do his will, he shall know of [that is come recognize] the teaching." (See John 7: 17.) Robertson calls this "experimental knowledge from willingness to do God's will," and quotes Westcott as saying, "If there be no sympathy there can be no understanding." All of this adds up to the fact that there must be moral harmony between man's purpose and God's will, as Robertson further points out. Vincent notes that "sympathy with the will of God is a condition of understanding it." The lack of sympathy regarding God's teaching on the subject of giving has doubtless been the major reason why so many professed Christians have failed to recognize his will on the subject.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?
Repeat the golden text.
Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Discuss the relationship between the closing part of chapter 8 and the beginning of chapter 9.
What can you say of the role which Titus played in the life and work of Paul?
What was his part in connection with the great contribution?
What is the place and purpose of giving on the first day of the week?
Where do we find the principles which should govern such giving?
What is the meaning of the term "principle" as used in this lesson?

Confidence Does Not Preclude Precautionary Measures

What do we learn in this section of the lesson text regarding the place from which Paul wrote this portion of Second Corinthians?
Why did Paul say that it was superfluous for him to write the Corinthians regarding the ministering to the saints?
Why, then, did he write about it?
Discuss the manner in which Paul wrote.
What effect did the "break" between Paul and the Corinthians have on the subject?
What important lesson should we learn from this incident?

Reaping Will Be in Proportion to the Sowing

Why is it important to understand the question of "motives" in connection with giving?

What four motives does the New Testament assign to governing Christians in their giving?
Why should these motives be emphasized often?
Why is it essential to understand something about both the wrong and the right ways to act with respect to giving?
What is the meaning of giving "grudgingly" or of "necessity"?
How could the contribution be of extortion?
What does it mean to give "as one is prospered"?
What is the meaning of "stewardship" giving?
How do people give when they give "cheerfully" and "readily"?
Why should Christians "abound in giv-

ing?"
Why should the Lord's people have a "purpose" in mind when they give?
What does the New Testament teach regarding "promised or pledged giving"?
What place should the question of equality have in our giving?
What does the New Testament teach with reference to the bestowal of temporal

In what way did Paul confirm this teaching?

God Will Bless Liberal Giving

What direct promise is made in this section of the lesson text?
What is the meaning of liberality?
What is the general result of liberal giv-

ing?
How much should Christians give?
In what way can people be certain that they understand the teaching of the Lord on the subject of giving?

Lesson VIII—November 24, 1963

PAUL DEFENDS HIMSELF

Lesson Text

2 Cor. 10: 3-16

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh

4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds),

5 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;

6 And being in readiness to avenge all disobedience, when your obedience shall be made full.

7 Ye look at the things that are before your face. If any man trusteth in himself that he is Christ's, let him consider this again with himself, that, even as he is Christ's, so also are we.

8 For though I should glory somewhat abundantly concerning our authority (which the Lord gave for building you up, and not for casting you down), I shall not be put to shame:

9 That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by my letters.

10 For, His letters, they say, are weighty and strong; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account.

11 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.

12 For we are not bold to number or compare ourselves with certain of them that commend themselves: but they themselves, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves, are without understanding.

13 But we will not glory beyond *our* measure, but according to the measure of the province which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even unto you.

14 For we stretch not ourselves overmuch, as though we reached not unto you: for we came even as far as unto you in the gospel of Christ:

15 Not glorying beyond *our* measure, *that is*, in other men's labors; but having hope that, as your faith groweth, we shall be magnified in you according to our province unto *further* abundance,

16 So as to preach the gospel even unto the parts beyond you, *and* not to glory in another's province in regard of things ready to our hand.

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Cor. 9: 12-15.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."* (2 Cor. 10: 17.)

Daily Bible Readings

November 18. M.	Paul's Clear Conscience (Acts 23: 1-3)
November 19. T.	Paul's Faith (2 Cor. 5: 1-10)
November 20. W.	Paul's Authority (Gal. 1: 11-17)
November 21. T.	Paul Branded (Gal. 6: 17, 18)
November 22. F.	Paul's Sufferings for Christ (2 Cor. 11: 16-33)
November 23. S.	Paul's Independence (2 Cor. 7: 2-16)
November 24. S.	Paul's Patience (2 Cor. 1-13)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Written from Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

It is astonishing to think that a man like the apostle Paul would have to defend himself concerning charges which were made against him by a church which he had founded, and

one for which he had done so much. But, strange as it may seem, it is doubtful if any church of the New Testament period ever made charges more serious against any gospel

preacher, than those which were made against Paul by the Corinthian brethren, as may be seen by reading chapters 10-13 of our Second Corinthians. They accused him of being fickle—of unprincipled equivocation—of being unable to make up his mind regarding his proposed visit to Corinth (1 Cor. 16: 5-9; 2 Cor. 1: 17; 2: 1.) They charged him with boasting of his authority over them (2 Cor. 10: 8; 13: 10), and with being moved by worldly motives (2 Cor. 10: 12). They charged him with being a false apostle (1 Cor. 9: 1-3; 2 Cor. 12: 11-13), and of being insignificant in appearance and of no account as a speaker (2 Cor. 10: 10). They accused him of being deceitful with reference to money, that is, he pretended to preach for them without accepting any remuneration from them, while at the same time actually getting the money which he was supposed to have refused through the collection which he authorized Titus to take (2 Cor. 11: 7-11; 12: 14-18). They accused him of not having any proof that Christ actually spoke through him (2 Cor. 13: 3).

Paul, of course, was greatly distressed when he heard of the way things were going in Corinth, and it is quite probable that his first impulse was to go to that city at once, and meet his critics face to face. But as he thought about his past experiences there, and especially of pleasanter days, he decided against going in person, and to write a letter instead. He was in no mood to give up in defeat, or to rest under the slander of his enemies in Corinth. He

resolved therefore to write another letter to the church in Corinth, and thereby make a supreme effort to regain his lost leadership, while at the same time endeavoring to bring the Corinthians to repentance. "But I determined this for myself, that I would not come again to you in sorrow. . . . 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." (2 Cor. 2: 1, 4.)

If First Corinthians enables us to look into the mind of Paul, observes Goodspeed, then Second Corinthians allows us to look into his very heart; and with this view of the matter it is easy for us to see that the apostle was not only a man of great intellectual powers, but also a man with a great emotional nature, frank, impulsive, and sensitive, capable of deep feeling of anxiety and grief, and of devotion and affection as well. Furthermore, he was a man who was not afraid to express the whole range of such emotions when the occasion demanded it. Second Corinthians is, in fact, nothing short of a self-portrait of Paul. Although Second Corinthians has never rivaled First Corinthians in usefulness and influence, it is easy to see that there is no other letter of Paul's which throws more light upon his character and motives, than the one which we are studying this quarter. It is in the information contained in our Second Corinthians that we have that which comes the nearest to being Paul's autobiography.

The Golden Text

"But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" In dealing with various problems and in teaching the truth to Christian people, Paul frequently made use of Old Testament scriptures, as he did in the case now before us. The golden text for today is an adaptation of a statement found in Jeremiah 9: 23, 24: "Thus saith Jehovah, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he hath understanding, and knoweth me, that I am Jehovah who

exerciseth lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith Jehovah." (Cf. Rom. 15: 18; Prov. 27: 2.) The verse following the golden text says, "For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth." (2 Cor. 10: 18; cf. Rom. 2: 29; 1 Cor. 4: 5.)

In making this application of the quotation from Jeremiah, Paul did two things, namely, (1) he stated his own rule of life (cf. 1 Cor. 1: 31), and (2) he drew the contrast between his method of procedure and

that of his critics. Paul would not glory in that which others had done—"yea, making it my aim so to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation" (Rom. 15: 20; cf. 2 Cor. 10: 15); but instead of following that course, the Judaizing teachers did not hesitate to enter into Paul's labors, disparage him, boast of that which they were doing, and pervert that which the apostle had done. (cf. 2 Cor. 11: 4; Gal. 1: 6-9.)

Many brethren now living can remember when it was a very common occurrence for those who had departed from the principles of the Res-

toration Movement, and had introduced many innovations into the pure worship and service of New Testament Christianity, to enter into and take over the buildings and work of those who had sacrificed to build up the cause of Christ; but those days are largely over, so far as the so-called Christian Church is concerned; for the brethren have learned how to deal with them and to protect their work and property. But the unfortunate and dishonest practice is not over; for the current "anti movement" is following precisely the same principle of entering into and taking over the work and property of faithful brethren, whenever and wherever they can.

The Text Explained

Paul's Means of Achieving a Conquest over All Adversaries of the Gospel

(2 Cor. 10: 3-6)

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the 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; and being in readiness to avenge all disobedience, when your obedience shall be made full.

The unusual manner in which Paul introduces his name in the beginning of chapter 10 should not be overlooked. This is the beginning of Paul's "painful letter" in which he defended his apostolic authority against his detractors and slanderers, who apparently used every method known to them to destroy the apostle's influence in Corinth. Commentators, almost to a man, regard this section of Second Corinthians as being completely different in character and tone from the rest of the epistle, as indeed it is; but many endeavor to explain the difference on the theory that the first part of the letter was addressed, in the main, to the majority of the church who were friendly to Paul, while this part was addressed to the minority who were opposed to him.

Attention has already been called to the fact that the "satisfactory

part" of the letter is addressed to "the church of God which is at Corinth. with all the saints that are in the whole of Achaia" (2 Cor. 1: 1), while the "sorrowful part" was directed to "them that have sinned heretofore, and to all the rest" (2 Cor. 13: 2). The truth of the matter apparently is this: the Corinthian church, like those of Galatia, fell into the hands of the Judaizers, and was, like the others, practically alienated from their founder. Paul's aim in this part of our Second Corinthians was either to make or break the unfortunate situation. He still felt that the brethren in Corinth were basically good, and that if he could win them from the influence of the false teachers who had led them astray all would be well. This is clearly implied in the introductory words of the chapter from which the lesson text is taken. "Now I Paul myself entreat you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I who in your presence am lowly among you, but being absent am of good courage toward you: yea, I beseech you, that I may not when present show courage with the confidence wherewith I count to be bold against some, who count of us as if we walked according to the flesh." (2 Cor. 10: 1, 2.)

After these words of introduction, in which he expressed a feeling of hope, Paul plunged immediately into the very heart of the situation; but he made it plain to the Corinthians that his entire effort to correct them would be characterized "by the

meekness and gentleness of Christ." He thereby brought himself into harmony with the means which had been given to him by the Lord to combat all sin and wrongdoing. The charge that he walked according to the flesh probably meant that he was governed by the principles of human nature, and used the things of the world to gain the ends which he desired. In the words of Barnes, "The charge was, probably, that he was not governed by high and holy principles, but by the principles of mere worldly policy; that he was guided by personal interests, and by worldly views—by ambition, or the love of dominion, wealth, or popularity, and that he was destitute of every supernatural endowment and every evidence of a divine commission."

Paul readily admitted that he lived as a human being, but he quickly added that the warfare which he was conducting was not according to the ways of this world. His real enemies were not human beings, as such, but those invisible influences of the devil which operate through those who depart from the truth and do all they can to destroy that which he was divinely enabled to do. The figure of a warfare, as applied to the Christian life, was a common one with Paul; and he was able by means of the analogy to present the truth in a most effective manner. The kind of attack which Paul made was such as to make it plain that his fight was not on a personal basis, man opposing man; but was solely for the purpose of winning men from error to the truth. This is an important lesson for us all to learn. Personal animosity nearly always has the effect of interfering with the high aim which should actuate the followers of Christ.

This is another instance in which the apostle Paul sought to enforce the common duties of life by high motives. His habit was to link the separate actions of life to great principles by which they were dominated, and in accordance with which they were regulated. This would insure that the spirit of Christ would always be manifested in that which was done. Such words as are found in the words of the lesson text could have been written only by a man who knew that he was in possession

of the gospel of incomparable worth and efficacy, and whose deliberate aim was to carry that gospel through whatever obstacles which might be before him to the very heart of the man whom he sought to reach. In short, Paul proposed to use his mighty weapons of warfare to cast down everything which was displeasing to the Lord, and then bring every thought (the source of all potential action) into captivity to the obedience of Christ. When people's thinking is correct their conduct will be too. (Cf. Prov. 23: 7; Matt. 5: 27, 28; 1 John 3: 15.) And then, if any remained disobedient when the church as a whole demonstrated their own obedience, the apostle assured them that he would be ready to take appropriate action against all such sinners.

Despite all Appearances to the
Contrary, Paul's Apostolic Authority
Is Mighty

(2 Cor. 10: 7-12)

Ye look at the things that are before your face. If any man trusteth in himself that he is Christ's, let him consider this again with himself, that, even as he is Christ's, so also are we. For though I should glory somewhat abundantly concerning our authority (which the Lord gave for building you up, and not for casting you down), I shall not be put to shame: that I may not seem as if I would terrify you by my letters. 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. For we are not bold to number or compare ourselves with certain of them that commend themselves: but they themselves, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves, are without understanding.

It seems quite clear from the context that Paul is talking directly to the members of the church in Corinth, the ones whom he was endeavoring to win back to Christ from the influence of the Judaizing teachers. If Paul could get the Corinthian brethren to look at things as they really are, he would have a

much better chance of getting them to see the truth. There are too many people who view the claims of false teachers in a shallow and superficial manner, and the result is that they are swayed away from the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. The first thing that any person who is confronted with new teaching should do is to make up his mind that he will do his best to ascertain the facts in the case. No better example of this can be found than that of the Bereans when they first heard Paul preach the gospel.

The message which Paul preached in Berea was the gospel of Christ, but the people there did not know it. But their disposition was such that they soon learned the truth regarding it. "Now, these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, [1] in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, [2] examining the scriptures daily, [3] whether these things were so. [4] Many of them therefore believed; . . . (Acts 17: 11, 12.) When people are willing to assume the responsibility for deciding such matters which they are expected to, false teachers will find that their work of leading people into error is not so easy.

After endeavoring to get the Corinthians to view matters in their proper perspective, Paul then entered into the question of comparing himself with his detractors and slanderers; and he boldly affirmed that he could furnish as great a claim for his apostolic authority, as they could. And furthermore, he told them that if he should boast of the authority which the Lord had given to him (and he made it plain to them that the purpose of the authority was for building them up, and not for casting them down), he would not be found guilty as being merely a pretended boaster. Or, to state the same thing in other words, he could back up his claim that he was a true minister of Christ. Any one who has the truth, and knows how to use it, does not need to resort to low and underhanded methods of seeking to establish his claim to being right in the sight of the Lord.

Paul's letters were matters of records, and his critics could not do otherwise than to admit that they "are weighty and strong," although

they probably did not use that expression in a complimentary sense. (It should be noted here that Paul is quoting his critics verbatim.) Robertson observes that the adjectives which Paul's enemies used with reference to his letters "can be uncomplimentary and mean 'severe and violent' instead of 'impressive and vigorous.' The adjectives bear either sense." That which they said about his bodily presence and speech was certainly uncomplimentary. Paul's reply to this was simple and to the point: Let anyone who feels that way about me take into consideration that fact that I will do when present exactly what I say in my letters. The reason why the slanderers felt so sure of themselves is seen in the fact that they used a very inferior standard for measuring their real worth, a standard which Paul could never accept for himself.

Paul's Divine Mission Included Corinth

(2 Cor. 10: 13-16)

But we will not glory beyond our measure, but according to the measure of the province which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even unto you. For we stretch not ourselves overmuch, as though we reached not unto you: for we came even as far as unto you in the gospel of Christ: not glorying beyond our measure, that is, in other men's labors; but having hope that, as your faith groweth, we shall be magnified in you according to our province unto abundance, so as to preach the gospel even unto the parts beyond you, and not to glory in another's province in regard of things ready to our hand.

The original word for "province" indicates a sphere of action or influence, and, as used here by the apostle it refers to the territory which was assigned to Paul by God himself. Vincent, in commenting on the original term, says, "To understand this expression, it is to be remembered that Paul regarded his ministry as specially to the Gentiles, and that he habitually refused to establish himself permanently where any former Christian teacher had preached. The Jewish teachers at Corinth had invaded his sphere as the apostle to the Gentiles, and had also occupied

the ground which he had won for himself by his successful labors among the Corinthians, as they did also at Antioch and in Galatia. He says here, therefore, that *his* boasting of his apostolic labors is not without measure, like that of those Jewish teachers who establish themselves everywhere, but is confined to the sphere appointed for him, of which Corinth, thus far, was the extreme limit. Hence *the measure of the rule* is the measure defined by the line which God has drawn. The image is that of surveying a district, so as to assign to different persons their different parcels of ground." (Cf. Acts 16: 6-10.)

The false teachers who had come to Corinth (cf. 2 Cor. 11: 4) had not only made claims for themselves which they could not substantiate; they had invaded the territory which Paul himself had already worked, and had taken charge of a church which he himself had planted. The apostle therefore was clearly within his own rights when he sought to win his brethren back from the erroneous teaching into which they had fallen. And he also expressed the hope that, as the faith of the Corin-

thians grew, they might also help him to do further missionary work in unworked regions, as the Philippians had done in the case of Corinth. (Cf. 2 Cor. 11: 8, 9; Phil. 4: 15.)

People today, of course, do not have certain territories set aside for them by the Lord, in which they have the exclusive right to preach the gospel and build up churches; but when faithful brethren enter a place and get the work started, it is not right for some hobby-riding brethren to come in and seek to gain control of that which has been done, and turn the brethren against those who were responsible for their conversion to Christ. But like the Judaizing teachers of Paul's day, these modern-day brethren will come into a community, without revealing their real motive, and then work in a manner unsuspecting to the congregation, until they either win the church to their own way of thinking or split it. If such people actually think that they are correct in their thinking regarding the issues in question, they ought to know that the Lord never approves of dishonest methods in accomplishing his work.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why did a man like Paul have to defend himself against charges by a church which he had founded?
What were some of the charges which were made against him?
Why didn't Paul go at once to Corinth and defend himself there?
What did he do instead?
Compare First and Second Corinthians with respect to their influence and usefulness.

The Golden Text

What use did Paul frequently make of Old Testament passages in his letters?
What twofold application did he make from the passage quoted here?
Discuss the difference between Paul's methods of work and those of his opponents.
Show how similar methods are being used by some brethren today.

Paul's Means of Achieving a Conquest over All Adversaries of the Gospel

What unusual use of Paul's name is found in the beginning of chapter 10?
What is the principal purpose of this portion of Second Corinthians?
Why was it necessary for Paul to write a "painful letter"?
Compare the work of Judaizing teachers in Corinth and Galatia.

In spite of their defection, how did Paul feel toward the Corinthian brethren?
What, then, was his method of approach toward them?
What lesson should we learn from this?
What principles governed Paul in his dealing with the situation now before us?
How did he answer the charge with reference to walking after the flesh?
What figure did he use to enforce his teaching here?
Upon what kind of a basis did Paul make his fight or his defense?
Why should personal animosity never be allowed to enter such a situation?
What use of the principle of linking "motives" to the case in hand did Paul make here?
Why did he say the weapons of warfare had been given to him?
What lesson should we learn from this?

Despite All Appearances to the Contrary, Paul's Apostolic Authority is Mighty

How do we know that Paul was speaking to the church in Corinth as such and not simply to some false teachers?
What did he tell the brethren that they were doing?
What important lesson is there in this for us?
How may one be sure that he is taking the proper view of a given situation?
What comparison did Paul make between himself and his opponents?

What did his critics say of him and why?
 What reply did Paul make to that charge?
 Paul's Divine Mission Included Corinth
 What figure did Paul use here and what
 did it imply?
 In what way had God assigned his terri-
 tory to him?
 How had his rights been violated?

What hope did Paul express regarding the
 Corinthian brethren?
 What modern application does this lesson
 have for our day?
 What lesson should these present-day
 disturbers of churches be able to see?
 Why should any honest person want to
 do his work under cover?

Lesson IX—December 1, 1963

PAUL WARNS OF FALSE TEACHERS

Lesson Text

2 Cor. 11: 3-16

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.

4 For if he that cometh preacheth another Je'-sus, whom we did not preach, or *if* ye receive a different spirit, which ye did not receive, or a different gospel, which ye did not accept, ye do well to bear with *him*.

5 For I reckon that I am not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.

6 But though *I be* rude in speech, yet *am I* not in knowledge; nay, in every way have we made *this* manifest unto you in all things.

7 Or did I commit a sin in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I preached to you the gospel of God for nought?

8 I robbed other churches, taking wages of *them* that I might minister unto you;

9 And when I was present with you and was in want, I was not a burden on any man; for the brethren, when they came from Mac-e-do'-ni-a,

supplied the measure of my want; and in everything I kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep *myself*.

10 As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this glorying in the regions of A-cha'-ia.

11 Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth.

12 But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them that desire an occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.

13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ.

14 And no marvel; for even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light.

15 It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works.

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.

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Tim. 4: 1-4.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God.” (1 John 4: 1)

Daily Bible Readings

- November 25. M. Jesus Warns of False Teachers (Matt. 7: 15-23)
- November 26. T. Doctrines of Demons (1 Tim. 4: 1-5)
- November 27. W. Sound Doctrine (2 Tim. 4: 1-7)
- November 28. T. “A Different Doctrine” (1 Tim. 6: 3-10)
- November 29. F. “A Good Minister” (1 Tim. 4: 6-16)
- November 30. S. John Warns of False Teachers (2 John 1-10)
- December 1. S. Examples of False Teachers (1 Tim. 1: 18-20)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Written from Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

The question of false teachers has been a major problem with God's people since the day that the devil spoke his lie to Eve in the garden of Eden. This fact can be verified by a simple reading of the Bible itself. A single Old Testament example shall suffice for that part of God's word. "Thus saith Jehovah of hosts Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they teach you vanity; they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of Jehovah. . . . I sent not these prophets, yet they ran: I spake not unto them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my council, then had they caused my people to hear my words, and had turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings." (Jer. 23: 16, 21, 22.)

Jesus dealt with the same problem all during his ministry here upon the earth. As he neared the conclusion of his great sermon on the mount, he warned, "Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? . . . Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast our demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. 7: 15-23.)

And the apostle Paul, speaking directly to a group of elders, men who had been authorized by the Holy Spirit to have the oversight of God's people, said, "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own

blood. I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them." (Acts 20: 28-30.) It was not many years after Paul spoke the words just quoted before he wrote to Timothy regarding that very same church: "As I exhorted thee to tarry at Ephesus, when I was going into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge certain men not to teach a different doctrine, neither to give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questionings, rather than a dispensation of God which is in faith; so do I now." (1 Tim. 1: 3, 4.)

God has always depended upon teachers to make known his will to men, but he has always required that those who speak his word be faithful to their trust. In writing to the Thessalonians, Paul said, "We waxed bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God in much conflict. For our exhortation is not of error, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: but even as we have been approved of God to be intrusted with the gospel, so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God who proveth our hearts." (1 Thess. 2: 2b-4.) And then to the Galatians he wrote: "I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema. For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? or am I striving to please men? if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ." (Gal. 1: 6-10.)

The Golden Text

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God." We know from that which has been said in the intro-

ductory portion of our lesson for today that a fearful responsibility rests upon every professed teacher of the word of God, but it is not enough

for the Lord's people to stop with that; they themselves are responsible for that which they hear. (Cf. Acts 17: 11, 12.) There are three exhortations regarding hearing which should always be firmly fixed in our minds, namely, (1) "Take heed *what* ye hear." (Mark 4: 24.) This should include the nature of that which one hears, and if the claim is that it comes from God, an effort should be made to test it. One should never show disinterest in or contempt for teaching, until he knows from whence it comes. (Cf. John 6: 44, 45.)

(2) "Take heed therefore *how* ye hear." (Luke 8: 18.) We must listen to God's word, whether it pleases us or not (cf. Isa. 55: 8, 9); and before anything is rejected, one should be sure that it is not scriptural teaching. (Contrast Balaam's attitude, Num. 22: 19, with that of Cornelius, Acts 10: 33.) It is easy for people to get into the habit of rejecting anything which is taught, if it is not in accordance with that which *they* think is right. (3) Take heed *whom* ye hear. (Matt. 17: 1-5; cf. Luke 10: 16; John 12: 48-50; Acts 3: 22, 23.) If one's moral purpose is in sympathy with the divine will (John 7: 17), and if he is willing to follow the simple rules which are listed above, it is very doubtful if he will go very far astray.

When one therefore is sure of his own attitude with reference to teaching which purports to come from God, he is then in position to test the teacher. The context of the passage now under consideration is as follows: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not Jesus is not of God: and this is the spirit of the antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it cometh; and now it is in the world already." People in John's day were dependent upon that which they were told by the letters or word of mouth of inspired men: but now that the Canon of the New Testament is in our hands, we can make the test by a diligent comparison of that which has been written. "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works." (2 John 9-11.)

The Text Explained

The Basis of Paul's Fear for the Corinthians' Loyalty (2 Cor. 11: 3-6)

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. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or if ye receive a different spirit, which ye did not receive, or a different gospel, which ye did not accept, ye do well to bear with him. For I reckon that I am not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. But though I be rude in speech, yet am I not in knowledge; nay, in every way have we made this manifest unto you in all things.

After the signal defeat of the Judaizing teachers at the Jerusalem conference, they apparently decided

to wage the war against their greatest opponent in the territory where his success had been the greatest, and endeavor to resist him in the very center of his influence—in the very heart of the Gentle churches which he had founded, namely, Corinth and the Galatian churches. Paul therefore was forced to meet the challenge of these false teachers, a thing which caused him much grief; but his loyalty to Christ and his great love for the disciples whom he had won for him left him with no other choice. But the apostle wanted his brethren to know his true feeling toward them, as he warned them of false teachers and their own defection from the truth; and that accounts for his introductory words: "Would that ye could bear with me in a little foolishness: but indeed ye do bear with me. 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." Nothing is more tragic than for a bride (or a groom, as for that matter) to prove unfaithful to her husband; but that is a favorite figure which is used to describe the Divine feeling for the spiritual adultery of God's people. (Jer. 13: 25-27; Ezek. 16: 30-34; Rev. 2: 20-22.)

The methods used by the false teachers in their efforts to draw away the disciples after them were similar to the one employed by the serpent in the garden of Eden when he overcame Eve, namely, deception. The term "craftiness" means cunning, trickery, (cf. Luke 20: 23; 1 Cor. 3: 19), and it was in that way that the victim was *beguiled*. To be "corrupted" from the *simplicity* (single-hearted loyalty) and the *purity* (sincerity) that is toward Christ, is to be led into fundamental doctrinal error. It is an amazing fact that those teachers who work under cover in congregations, with which they had little or nothing to do in establishing, are following the same plan which both the serpent and the Judaizing teachers employed; and why they can't see it is both astonishing and incredible.

When the first two verses of the text now before us are compared with Gal. 1: 6, 7, it will be seen that the two situations which Paul describes are practically the same. Phillips renders 2 Cor. 11: 3, 4 in these words: "I am afraid that your minds may be seduced from a singlehearted devotion to him by the same subtle means that the serpent used toward Eve. For apparently you cheerfully accept a man who comes to you preaching a different Jesus, from the one we told you about, and you readily receive a spirit and a gospel quite different from the ones you originally accepted." Now, with those words in mind, read Goodspeed's translation of Gal. 1: 6, 7: "I am amazed that you are so quickly turning away from him who called you by the mercy of Christ, to some different good news—not that there is any other, only that there are some people who are trying to unsettle you and want you to turn the good news of Christ around." In both instances the Judaizing zealots were endeavor-

ing to turn the Gentile converts from their undivided loyalty to Christ to a system of teaching which, in a very real sense, rendered the unadulterated gospel null and void. Christ will not countenance any change whatsoever in that which he has commanded. (Cf. Matt. 7: 21-23.)

But the Judaizers and present-day hobby riders among us are not the only false teachers who thus deal with the word of the Lord. Practically all denominational preachers do not hesitate to try to twist the gospel plan of salvation around, so as to make it seem that baptism has no place in the scheme of human redemption. For example, Jesus says, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned." (Mark 16: 15, 16.) But present-day preachers say, "He that believeth is saved. He may be baptized later, if he so desires and would like to become a church member; but he is saved before and without water baptism." Any person who wants to can easily see that the latter teaching makes the language of Jesus void (Matt. 15: 6; Mark 7:6-9); and as John states the matter, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9.)

When Paul wrote the words of the text now under consideration, he was dealing with a fundamental error, namely, that of altering the inspired message of the Lord. Therefore both the teachers and the taught come under his condemnation, that is, when the taught accept the erroneous instruction of the teachers. The church in Corinth had departed from the truth, and nothing short of a change of mind on their part would enable them to return to their original purity. That was why Paul was writing to the church as such, rather than to the false teachers. "For though I made you sorry with my epistle, I do not regret it: though I did regret it (for I see that that epistle made you sorry, though but for a season), I now rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye were sorry unto repentance; for

ye were made sorry after a godly sort, that ye might suffer loss by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, a repentance which bringeth no regret: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold, this selfsame thing, that ye were made sorry after a godly sort, what earnest care it wrought in you, yea what clearing of yourselves, yea what indignation, yea what fear, yea what longing, yea what zeal, yea what avenging! *In everything ye approved yourselves to be pure in the matter.*" (2 Cor. 7: 8-11.) This statement shows the results which Paul's "sorrowful letter" accomplished.

Verses 5, 6 of this section of the lesson text are an obvious reference to the charges which Paul's enemies made against him. (See 2 Cor. 10: 10.) The "chiefest apostles" were not the genuine apostles of Christ (cf. Gal. 2: 9), but the "sham apostles" who opposed Paul. Paul's reference to them is ironical. Farrar calls them "the extra-super apostles." Phillips translates verses 5, 6 in these words: "Yet I cannot believe I am in the least inferior to these extraspecial messengers of yours. Perhaps I am not a polished speaker, but I do know what I am talking about, and both what I am and what I say is pretty familiar to you."

Paul's Reason for Not Accepting Pay
from the Corinthians
(2 Cor. 11: 7-12)

Or did I commit a sin in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I preached to you the gospel of God for nought. I robbed other churches, taking wages of them that I might minister unto you; and when I was present with you and was in want, I was not a burden on any man; for the brethren, when they came from Macedonia, supplied the measure of my want; and in everything I kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself. As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this glorying in the regions of Achaia. Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth. But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them that desire an occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.

Paul's question, "Or did I commit a sin in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I preached to you the gospel of God for nought?" is ironical in its nature, as is indeed a major part of 2 Cor., chapters 10-13. In commenting on this section of the lesson text, *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, makes the following observations, Paul fully recognized God's law which holds that "the laborer is worthy of his hire" (Luke 10: 7; 1 Tim. 5: 18); for he had already given a clear exposition of this principle in 1 Cor. 9: 1-14, as it applies to gospel preachers. It was on the basis of this law that he had, more than once, accepted support from the generous church in Philippi (Phil. 4: 15, 16); but that was not his usual practice (1 Thess. 2: 9; Acts 18: 1-3; 20: 34, 35).

This policy of Paul's was clearly different from his opponents in Corinth; for they did take pay from the Corinthians (1 Cor. 9: 12), and it appears that they prided themselves in doing so, since that was the privilege of "apostles." But Paul had fully made up his mind that it could never be truly said of him that he was a hireling teacher; and he very carefully stated his reason for that attitude (1 Cor. 9: 15-23; cf. Gen. 14: 21-24). But this honorable independence on Paul's part created a difficulty which operated in two directions, namely, (1) it gave his opponents an excuse for saying that Paul knew that he was not of apostolic rank (1 Cor. 9: 1, 2), and was unwilling therefore to accept money on that basis; and (2) it apparently injured the feelings of the Corinthian brethren, in that it seem to imply that they were inferior to other churches which supported him (2 Cor. 12: 13).

Paul's reply to these charges and implications is made in the language of the text which is now before us, namely, in verses 7-12. He says that his action was necessary, in order to silence his opponents; for if he permitted them to have such an occasion, the result would be that he would be brought down to their level (cf. 2 Cor. 12: 14). That "they may be found even as we" probably means, according to Alford, that there may be no extraneous or casual comparisons made between us arising out of misrepresentations of my course of

procedure among you; but that in every matter of boasting we may be fairly compared and judged by facts.

A True Appraisal of Paul's Enemies (2 Cor. 11: 13-16)

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light. It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

One of the facts of early church history was the speedy appearance of false teachers, as may be seen by reading such passages as Gal. 2: 4; Phil. 1: 15; 3: 18; Tit. 1: 10; 2 Pet. 2: 1; 1 John 4: 1. Jesus warned of this condition while he was here upon the earth, as we have already seen from a quotation in the Sermon on the Mount. The great tragedy which grew out of the work of false teachers was the corruption of and departure from the truth of the Lord's people; and that, in the estimate of Christ and the apostles deserved total destruction on the part of such teachers. It is a fact, worthy of special notice, that neither Jesus nor his apostles ever showed the slightest sympathy for, or in any way sought to excuse such men. (Cf. Matt. 23: 15; Gal. 1: 6-9; 5: 12; 2 Pet. 2: 3; Jude 12, 13.)

Paul, in the passage now under consideration, clearly identifies the Judaizing teachers in Corinth as

"false apostles" (cf. Gal. 2: 3-5); and they were the ones concerning whom he said that he was "not a whit behind the very chiefest" of them. Such men are not interested in the glory of God and the edification of God's people, but are bent on having their own way. They are further described in these words by Paul: "For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is perdition, whose god is the belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." (Phil. 3: 18, 19.) In the language of the text now before us, they are ministers of Satan, notwithstanding the fact that they endeavor to make it appear that they are ministers of righteousness. False teachers have no place in the economy of Christ, and it is certain that he expects his people to keep that fact in mind and act accordingly. (Read again 2 John 10, 11.)

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. This verse should be read in the light of verse 1 of the chapter now under consideration. The Corinthians had permitted the "false apostles" to boast of their position and abilities, and now Paul asks for the same privilege. He really had something to tell the Corinthians, and the practical meaning of his statement is this: Whatever you think of me personally, you had better listen to that which I have to say to you. (Cf. 2 Cor. 10: 7-12.)

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?
Repeat the golden text.
Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Discuss the problem of false teachers, as the question is revealed in the Bible. What is God's attitude toward them, as revealed through Jeremiah?
In what way did Jesus deal with the problem?
What did Paul say to the Ephesian elders regarding the subject?
What use has God always made of teachers? Discuss.
What trait does he always require in them?

The Golden Text

What responsibility do the "taught" have with reference to false teachers?
Cite and discuss a well known example of this.
What three significant exhortations are given regarding "hearing"?

When is a person qualified to test a teacher?

Under what circumstances did John write the words of the golden text for today?
What specific instruction does he give regarding this question?

The Basis of Paul's Fear for the Corinthian's Loyalty

Why were the Judaizing teachers so violently opposed to Paul?
What was their plan of attack, following their signal defeat at the Jerusalem conference?
Where was the field of their operation against Paul and why?
What did they force Paul to do?
Why was Paul so interested in the Corinthian brethren?
In what light does the Lord regard his unfaithful people?
What was the nature of the methods which the false teachers employed in their efforts to draw away the disciples after them?

What does it mean to be corrupted from the simplicity and purity that is toward Christ?

Why do some teachers today want to work in churches under cover?

What leads us to conclude that the situations in Corinth and Galatia were practically the same?

Show why Christ will not countenance any change in his law.

Why do many preachers today endeavor to "twist" the gospel of Christ?

What will be the results of such efforts?

Why did Paul write to the church in Corinth, rather than to the false teachers who had led the brethren astray?

What effect did his letter to them have?

What did Paul mean by saying that he was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles?

Paul's Reason for Not Accepting Pay from the Corinthians

What was Paul's teaching regarding the support of gospel preachers?

Why did he refuse to accept pay, as a rule, for himself?

Why did he decline to accept any from the Corinthians?

What general effect did his policy in this respect have in Corinth?

In what way did Paul reply to the charges which were brought against him in regard to accepting financial support from the Corinthian brethren?

What did he mean by saying that "they may be found even as we"?

A True Appraisal of Paul's Enemies

What does the New Testament say about the prevalence of false teachers during the early age of the church?

How do we know that Paul had the Judaizers in mind when he referred to his not being a whit behind the chiefest apostles?

What does the New Testament say regarding the doom of false teachers?

In what way do false teachers endeavor to conceal their real nature?

What is the church's responsibility regarding them?

Lesson X—December 8, 1963

PAUL'S LABORS AND SUFFERINGS

Lesson Text

2 Cor. 11: 18-33

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 Is'-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.

29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is caused to stumble, and I burn not?

30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things that concern my weakness.

31 The God and Father of the Lord Je'-sus, he who is blessed for evermore knoweth that I lie not.

32 *In* Da-mas'-cus the governor under Ar'-e-tas the king guarded the city of the Dam-a-scenes' in order to take me:

33 And through a window was I let down in a basket by the wall, and escaped his hands.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Having therefore such a hope, we use great boldness of speech" (2 Cor. 3: 12.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gal. 6: 14-18.

Daily Bible Readings

December 2.	M.....	Paul's Desire (2 Thess. 3: 1-5)
December 3.	T.....	Paul's Labors (2 Thess. 3: 6-10)
December 4.	W.....	Paul's Concern for Brethren (1 Thess. 3: 13)
December 5.	T.....	Shamefully Treated (1 Thess. 2: 1-12)
December 6.	F.....	Grace Abounded for Paul (1 Tim. 1: 12-17)
December 7.	S.....	Persecutions Endured (2 Tim. 3: 10-17)
December 8.	S.....	Crown Awaiting Paul (2 Tim. 4: 1-8)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Written from Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

Paul's philosophy as a Christian teacher may be summed up in his final charge to his beloved son in the gospel, Timothy: "I charge thee in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables. But be thou sober in all things, suffer hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil thy ministry. For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing." (2 Tim. 4: 1-8.)

The Christian life is, of course, the greatest life which any one can live; but that life, as *The Great Texts of the Bible* points out, is not the passive, reclining, restful experience that some have thought, sitting at Jesus' feet, or leaning on his breast. There is that side of it, to be sure; but the battle is to get there, and to keep oneself there. "Believe me," wrote Samuel Rutherford to the Earl of Lothian, "I find it hard wrestling, to play fair with Christ and to maintain a course of daily communion

with him." It takes the whole of a man the whole of his time to be a Christian. The world, the flesh, and the devil are all real enough to the earnest soul, and they must be faced and fought in the pathway to spiritual success. The New Testament does not deceive anyone in this respect. The strait gate, the narrow way, the much tribulation, the cross of which it speaks, as well as the hosts of darkness—all point to a strenuous conflict as the very condition of the Christian life.

The overruling motive which inspired Paul in his labors and sufferings for the gospel's sake was patterned after that which actuated Christ. "Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb. 12: 1, 2.) When people have something to live for and a goal to reach, they are willing to make any kind of personal sacrifice and endure any kind of suffering, in order to accomplish their aim in life. "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." (2 Tim. 2: 10.) "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward." (Rom. 8: 18; cf. 2 Cor. 4: 16-18.)

The Golden Text

"Having therefore such a hope, we use great boldness of speech." These

words are a part of Paul's argument in which he showed the contrast be-

tween the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ, or, which is the same thing, between the old covenant and the new. The Judaizing teachers who had alienated the Corinthian brethren from him, had brought great distress to Paul, as may be seen by reading the last four chapters of Second Corinthians; and now as the reconciliation between them was being accomplished, Paul was indeed qualified to employ great boldness of speech. Hope and confidence go hand in hand, especially when the hope is in the process of being realized. This was emphasized by Paul in the following passage:

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward. For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not

only so, but ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For in hope were we saved: but hope that is seen is not hope: for who hopeth for that which he seeth? But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." (Rom. 8: 18-25.)

Suffering as such is not necessarily beneficial to the sufferer, nor pleasing to God; but when the suffering is for the sake of the gospel, and grows out of the labors which one engages in in obedience to the Lord, then his reward will be great; for that is the promise made to the faithful. "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; 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." (1 Pet. 4: 1, 2.) It is doubtful if any follower of Christ ever suffered more for the cause of his Lord, than did Paul; but he could quickly forget all of that, when the glories which would follow came into his mind.

The Text Explained

An Ironic Defense of Paul's Sanity

(2 Cor. 11: 18-21)

Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I trill glory also. For ye bear with the foolish gladly, being wise yourselves. 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. 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.

Paul begins the paragraph from which this section of the lesson text is taken with these words: "I say again, Let no man think me foolish; but if ye do, yet as foolish receive me, that I may glory a little. That which I speak, I speak not after the Lord, but as in foolishness, in this confidence of glorying." (2 Cor. 11: 16, 17.) The Judaizing teachers in the Corinthian church, along with the Corinthians themselves, forced Paul into the distasteful task of de-

fending both himself and his work. But since the defense had to be made, Paul describes it as foolishness and asked the brethren to be patient with him, since the circumstances which brought the self-vindication on were of the utmost importance to him.

Ironic language, when properly used, is often most effective in getting people to see themselves as they really are. The chief idea in irony is the ability to enable the person for whom it is intended to see the difference between what is said and that which is actually meant. This is clearly seen in the passage now before us: "For ye bear with the foolish gladly, being wise yourselves." Irony is so closely related to sarcasm and satire as to make them all synonymous. A sarcastic statement intends to inflict pain on its object by deriding him and making him look ridiculous, while a satirical statement means to censure the one for whom it is intended by holding him up for ridicule and reprobation.

Any one who reads Paul aright will readily see that he was both ironical and sarcastic in the portion of Second Corinthians now under consideration; and when those terms are properly understood, it is easy to see why he employed such language. This, however, does not justify the uncontrolled use of such language, but only by those whose hearts are pure and whose motives are holy. If a vindictive man employs such speech or writing, he usually aims at condemnation and revenge; while a person with the heart and motive of Paul intends to convict and redeem. (Cf. 2 Cor. 7: 8-11.) And it is doubtful if anything short of ironical or sarcastic language would have brought the Corinthians to their senses.

The force of Paul's use of ironical and sarcastic language in the case now before us is emphasized by Williams in his translation: "Let me say again that no one must think that I am a fool; but if you do, please treat me like a fool and let me do a little boasting too, as other fools do. But when I talk in this boastful confidence, I am not talking in accordance with the way the Lord talked, but just as a fool talks. Since my boast is in accordance with their human nature, I will do it too. For you who are so wise yourselves are glad to listen to fools! For you listen to a man, if he makes you his slave, or spends your money for his living, or cheats you, or puts on airs, or slaps you in the face.

I am ashamed to say that I was. as it were, so weak in the matter. And yet in whatever respect anyone else is daring to boast—I am talking like a fool—I too will dare to boast." (2 Cor. 11: 16-21.)

Paul is in this passage continuing the contrast between his apostolic labors and those of his opponents, namely, the Judaizing teachers whom he calls "false apostles;" and he intends to show how much better his position is for boasting than that of his Judaizing rivals. And notwithstanding the fact that Paul's language is unquestionably ironical and sarcastic, it is true that he did ascribe to the Corinthians a degree of wisdom in his previous letter to them (cf. 1 Cor. 10: 15). His aim here is to show them that since they had borne with the self com-

mendation of the false-apostles, they at least should extend the same indulgent toleration to him. And he then goes on to remind them of the insolence and ill-treatment which they had endured at the hands of these self-constituted spiritual leaders. (Cf. The Expositor's Greek Testament, *in loco*.)

The original word for bring into bondage (*katadouloi*) is found in the New Testament only here and in Gal. 2: 4, where the meaning is clearly the work of the Judaizing teachers. But instead of trying to enslave the Corinthians himself, Paul described himself as their "servants [bondservants, margin] for Jesus' sake." (2 Cor. 4: 5; cf. Gal. 5: 1.) The "devouring" had reference to the greedy demands of the "super-fine apostles" for their maintenance at the hands of the Corinthians (cf. Mark 12: 40), which was the exact opposite of the course which Paul followed (2 Cor. 11: 8-11). "Taketh you captive" as fish are caught in a net (Luke 5: 5), craftiness. The "exalting" is rendered "put on airs" by Williams, while Plummer calls it arrogance. This was in marked contrast with Paul's humility. *The Expositor's Greek Testament* notes that a blow in the face was, and is, a common form of insult in the East (cf. 1 Kings 22: 24; Matt. 5: 39; 26: 67; Acts 23: 2; 1 Cor. 4: 11); and the despotic teachers whom the Corinthians tolerated had very likely inflicted this last indignity upon them. (Vol. III, p. 104f.) The "man" of verses 20 is probably the "one" of 2 Cor. 2: 5-11.

In commenting on verse 21, Alford says that this was "an ironical reminiscence of his own abstinence when among them from all these acts of self-exaltation at their expense; as much as to say (ironically), 'I feel that I am much letting myself down by the confession that I was too weak ever to do any of these things among you.'" Plummer observes that "they more than tolerate those who trample on them while they criticise as 'weak' one who shows them great consideration." There are some brethren today who would do well to consider the manner in which they are being treated by some religious "leaders" who do not hesitate to go into congregations with which they have had nothing to do with their planting,

growth, and development, but who do not suffer any qualms of conscience when they endeavor to "take over" or split the church, and confiscate the property. It would be well for the leaders of such congregations to do as Paul did in the closing part of verse 21, namely, change his tone from irony to one of direct and masterful assertion; and then make good the "boast" as Paul did in the next section of the lesson text, "which he has been leading up to with such prolonged explanations."

His Unparalleled Sufferings (2 Cor. 11: 22-27)

Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. 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. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. 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; in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my countrymen, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in labor and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

It is almost certain that no man of recorded history ever labored under more difficulties and suffered more, than did Paul; and when we consider the fact that he continued his efforts for some years after this epistle was written (especially during the time covered by the epistles to Timothy and Titus), it is fair to assume that other trials were added to these. Some of the things mentioned by Paul are matters of recorded history, but about others we know nothing except what is said here. This list is therefore far more complete than any which could be compiled from the record in Acts and Paul's other epistles. The Jews were permitted to administer punishment to offenders by whipping; but they were not allowed to give the victim more than forty stripes. (See Deut 25: 1-3.) It seems that the Jews of Paul's day, and of course

earlier, decided to limit the number of stripes to thirty-nine, so as to be on the safe side.

Practically any professed follower of Christ today would heartily commend the course which Paul pursued, even though it did frequently get him into trouble; but any thoughtful observer knows that few churches today would want a preacher who was involved in so many unpleasant, to say nothing of humiliating experiences, even if they came in consequence of devoted service in the cause of Christ. The story is told of a congregation which was in need of a preacher. One of the elders was interested in knowing just what kind of minister his people desired; and he, accordingly, wrote a letter, as if he had received it from an applicant, and read it before the "pulpit committee." The letter follows:

Gentlemen:

I understand that you are in need of a preacher, and I would like to apply for the place. I have many qualifications for such work, which I think that you will appreciate. I have been blessed to the extent that I believe that my preaching is with power; and I have also had some success as a writer of religious subjects. Some say that I am a good organizer, and I have been a leader in the work in most of the places where I have labored. Some brethren, however, have some things against me, and I feel that it is only fair for me to tell you of them.

I am over fifty years of age, and I have never preached in one place for more than three years. In some instances I have left town after my work caused riots and disturbances; and I will have to admit that I have been in jail three or four times, but not because of any wrongdoing on my part. My health is not too good, although I am still able to accomplish more than the average for a man of my age. I have had to work with my own hands to help pay my living expenses, and for some others who were with me at the time; and I might add that the churches in which I have preached, while located in some of our largest cities, were relatively small.

I have not been able to get along too well with the religious leaders in different places where I have

preached. In fact, some of them have threatened me, have taken me to court, and have assaulted me physically. I am not very efficient at keeping records; I have even been known to forget those whom I have baptized. However, if you can use me, I shall do my best for you, even if I have to work at my trade in order to help with my support.

After the elder had read this letter, he asked if the committee was interested in the preacher who wrote it. The members of the committee promptly replied that such a man would never do for their congregation—that they were not interested in any unhealthy, trouble-making, contentious ex-jailbird, and were insulted that his application had even been presented to them; but they did say that they would like to know the name of the applicant, whereupon the elder who had read the letter answered, *The Apostle Paul!*

Glorying in Weakness—An Amazing Paradox

(2 Cor. 11: 28-33)

Besides those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is caused to stumble, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things that concern my weakness.

In addition to the things which Paul has just mentioned, and perhaps other experiences which he could have named, he calls attention to another great burden which he bore daily, anxious care for all the

churches. One has only to read Paul's epistles in order to get some idea of what was involved in this last named trial. Many of the brethren were weak, and that caused Paul to manifest the same attitude (1 Cor. 9: 22); and when others stumbled, he burned with indignation—standing, as it were, between the offender and the offended; indignant at the one, while sympathizing with the other. Calvin notes that "care implies sympathy: so that the minister of Christ takes on him the feelings of all, that he may accommodate himself to all. . . . It was contrary to Paul's nature to glory; but having been forced into it, he would let it concern that which others considered his weakness—weakness for allowing himself to be involved in such experiences.

The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed for evermore knoweth that I lie not. This solemn asseveration, which may have been thrown in somewhat independently (Lipscomb), probably has reference both to that which he has just said, and that which he was about to say.

In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king guarded the city of the Damascenes in order to take me: and through a window was I let down in a basket by the wall, and escaped his hands. It appears that Paul's aim in reciting this incident (cf. Acts 9: 23-25) was to illustrate in detail the manner in which he was providentially protected in the many experiences through which he passed during his career as a minister of Christ.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Discuss Paul's philosophy as a Christian teacher.
What are some of the things involved in living the Christian life?
Tell something of the passive and active sides of it.
What was Paul's overruling motive in his labors and suffering for Christ?
Why is a motive so important in any worthwhile undertaking?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances did Paul write the words of this text?
Why was Paul qualified to use great boldness of speech?

What relationship do hope and confidence bear toward each other?

In what way did Paul illustrate this relationship?

When is suffering pleasing to God and beneficial to the sufferer?

An Ironical Defense of Paul's Sanity

Why did Paul resort to boasting and the use of ironical language?

What did he say regarding such glorying?

What responsibility did the church have in this respect?

What is "ironical language" and under what circumstances is it useful?

Why did Paul grow sarcastic at times?

When is it safe for a person now to employ ironical or sarcastic language?

What was Paul's primary purpose in addressing the Christians as he did in this section of the lesson text?

What did he say that the Judaizing leader had done to them?
 What did Paul mean by saying that he spoke "by way of disparagement"?
 What important lesson is there in this section for us?

His Unparalleled Sufferings

What can you say of the labors and sufferings of Paul?
 How alone did we come to have the information regarding much of them?
 How do people generally feel about Paul's mistreatment and humiliation?
 What would be the prevailing attitude toward a preacher today if he should suffer such treatment and indignities?
 Give reasons for your answer.

Glorying in Weakness—an Amazing Paradox

What other burdens did Paul have, in addition to the sufferings and trials mentioned in the preceding section of the lesson text?
 Why did the churches cause him so much anxiety?
 What will a faithful minister of Christ always try to do with reference to others?
 Why did Paul insert the solemn affirmation regarding that which he was writing?
 What was his evident purpose in reciting the incident which took place at Damascus?

Lesson XI—December 15, 1963

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.—"My grace is sufficient for thee." (2 Cor. 12: 9.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Thess. 2: 13-16.

Daily Bible Readings

- December 9. M. Vision on Mt. of Transfiguration (Matt. 17: 1-9)
- December 10. T. "Lord in a Vision" (Acts 9: 1-10)
- December 11. W. Vision of Cornelius (Acts 10: 1-8)
- December 12. T. Vision of Peter (Acts 10: 9-23)
- December 13. F. Vision of Paul in Corinth (Acts 18: 1-9)
- December 14. S. Revelation from Christ (Gal. 1: 5-12)
- December 15. S. Not Disobedient to Vision (Acts 26: 2-23)

Time.—A.D. 57.

Place.—Written from Ephesus.

Persons.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

Looking at the matter from the purely human point of view, it seems a shame that Paul had to employ so much of his time and energy in defending himself and his work as a minister of Christ; but when we take into account the fact of human nature and man's proneness to sin, it is, of course, a blessing that we have Paul's writings on record. Many of the problems which affect churches today are much more easily solved when careful attention is given to that which Paul wrote, along with other records found in the New Testament. Jesus does not want a single individual lost (1 Tim. 2:3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9), and we should therefore be grateful for everything which is found in the New Testament regarding human relationships, and the Lord's plan for bringing the erring and rebellious to repentance.

And furthermore, it is doubtful if a more representative church could be found which would bring out more forcefully the various aspects involved in the corruption and reclamation of Christian personality, than the church in Corinth. Judging from the information which we have, that church must have been full of strenuous people—decided individuals, eager for all that which the gospel had to give them in the way of gifts and endowments, rights and hopes. This has been a blessing to us too; for it called forth all of Paul's resources of intuition and explanation, supervised by the Holy Spirit, and in the end immensely enriched the literature of the Christian religion.

It is true that the Corinthians sometimes tried Paul's patience to the breaking point, as in the case now under study; but even that led to richer and fuller disclosures of religious truth on his part, and revealed the great apostle himself, along with his motives and methods, as no other of his letters do. We should therefore be extremely thankful for the epistles which Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians.

Practically the entire contents of the last four chapters of our Second Corinthians, as has already been pointed out, are given to Paul's defense of his apostolic office and authority. Paul never stayed at any place very long at a time, and that fact gave his enemies the opportunity of entering into his places of labor among the Gentiles, and sowing the seed of discord. These Judaizing teachers did not consider Paul as a genuine apostle, and that, of course, meant that they regarded his preaching as being both spurious and dangerous. After their signal defeat at the Jerusalem conference, they made a concentrated effort to overthrow Paul's work wherever they could gain a foothold. This great fight led Paul to write some of the most valuable information regarding the ways and means of convicting erring brethren of sin, and leading them to repentance, which we have on record. The lesson before us today is a continuation of Paul's defense which we have been considering in the two previous chapters.

The Golden Text

This portion of our lesson is a part of the principal text, and it will be considered in its proper place.

The Text Explained

Further Grounds for Glorifying (2 Cor. 12: 1-5)

I must needs glory, though it is not expedient; but I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. Paul, in the previous chapter, explained to the Corinthians that glorifying or boasting was foolish, but they and the Judaizers had forced him into it. Here he repeats the same thing, and adds that it is not "expedient," that is, it is not profitable; but since the situation was such as it is, he

would have to go on with it. However, instead of glorifying in his weaknesses, he proposed to come to that which had to do with the miraculous. The fact that these visions and revelations had been vouchsafed to him, was evidence, in and of itself, that he was acceptable to God. (Cf. Acts 5: 32.)

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. And I know such a man (whether in the body, or apart from the body, I know not; God knoweth), how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. On behalf of such a one will I glory: but on mine own behalf I will not glory, save in my weaknesses.

Although Paul speaks of "a man in Christ" as if it were some other person, it is generally understood that he was speaking of himself. The reason why he did not refer to himself directly was probably because of the nature of the experience, and because of his own humility. John followed this course in the writing of his gospel record. This last named apostle enjoyed a very close relationship with Jesus, and it was probably because of his modesty, as well as to forestall any charge that he was exploiting his great privilege, that he refrained from recording his own name in connection with the life of Jesus which he wrote. If Paul had related the facts which he names here as a personal experience, the probability is that he would have been accused of being proud, and would probably have excited the envy or ill-will of others. There are, however, two strong reasons for thinking that the apostle referred to himself, namely, (1) the trend of his arguments requires that he mention something which had happened to him, and (2) he applies the experience to himself in verse 7.

While the experience which is related in the text now under consideration was unquestionably Paul's, he says that he did not know just how it happened, that is, whether both his spirit and his body were involved, or whether only his spirit was at the place of the visions and revelations. The fact that Paul was "caught" up to the third heaven indicates that he was suddenly seized and transported to the celestial realm by miraculous power. (Cf. Acts 8: 39; 1 Thess. 4: 17; Rev. 12: 5, where the same original word is used.) The time of these visions and revelations is given as fourteen years before Paul wrote the letter we are now studying to the Corinthians. If Paul wrote in A.D. 57, as is generally understood, then the visions and revelations took place

in A.D. 43, which may have been during the latter part of his stay in Tarsus, or the first part of his stay in Antioch. (See Acts 9: 26-30; 11: 25, 26; cf. Alford, Meyer, et al, *in loco*.) The Lord had selected Paul for a work which would involve persecutions and sufferings (Acts 9: 15, 16), and it is very probable that the visions and revelations which came to him at the time here mentioned were intended to strengthen him for the tasks and trails which were before him. J. W. Shepherd notes that the experience "certainly braced him for the whole heroic career of unparalleled success which lay before him as a herald of the cross."

It appears that Paul uses the expressions "third heaven" and "Paradise" interchangeably. Many of the Jews spoke of three heavens, and that idea has a scriptural basis. The first heaven, according to this view, is the space above where the birds fly (Luke 9: 58); the second, where the sun, moon, and stars are (Psalm 19: 1-6; Gen. 1: 14-18; Judges 5: 20); while the third heaven is where God is (Deut. 4: 39). If the third heaven and Paradise are used synonymously, then Paradise evidently has reference to the basic idea of blessedness. The word occurs only three times in the entire New Testament (Luke 23: 43; 2 Cor. 12: 4; Rev. 2: 7); and while Luke 23: 43 evidently refers to the intermediate state or dwelling-place of the dead, between death and the resurrection (cf. Acts 2: 27), it is certain that Rev. 2: 7 has reference to the dwelling-place of God. The marginal reading for "Paradise" in the latter passage is *garden*: as in Gen. 2: 8, and it appears quite evident that the thought in the mind of Jesus was that of a restored Eden or a garden of delights. Harper's Bible Dictionary notes that this use of Paradise to mean heaven has become common in the language of Christian devotion.

The message which Paul heard in heaven is described as "unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." The original term for "unspeakable" is *arrhētos* and literally means, according to Arndt-Gingrich, inexpressible, that is, something beyond the power of human ability to utter, being "words too sacred to tell." The English "unspeakable" occurs

three times in the New Testament (2 Cor. 9: 15; 12: 4; 1 Pet. 1: 8), but in each instance there is a different original word, which is found nowhere else in the New Testament. The term "unlawful" is used in the sense of not being authorized or permitted to speak. (Cf. Matt. 12: 1-12, where the same original word is found in verses 2, 4, 10, 12.) If Paul had been authorized by the Lord to speak the words which he heard in Paradise, he could, of course, have uttered them (cf. Acts 2: 4; 2 Pet. 1: 21); but in the absence of such authority, he was neither permitted nor able to speak those things which he had heard.

Paul is apparently the only man who ever went to heaven, and then came back to the earth and was privileged to give important information, though of course different from the visions and revelations of this lesson, regarding the world of eternal bliss. If there is an exception to this, it would be John, following the Revelation which was made through him. Elijah was taken to heaven, and came back to the mount of transfiguration; but there is no indication that he imparted any information about heaven to anyone on the earth. If any should wonder why Paul was not permitted to disclose that which he heard in heaven, it should be remembered that the Lord has not revealed all the reasons for his actions (cf. Deut. 29: 29; Rom. 11: 33-36), and, furthermore, he wants his people to learn to walk by faith, rather than by sight (2 Cor. 5: 7; cf. 1 Cor. 1: 21; Rom. 1: 16, 17).

Practically anyone would concede that Paul could justly glory on behalf of a person who had had such an experience as he has described; but since Paul was speaking of that in the third person, his aim was to keep himself, as the Corinthians knew him, out of view. The only things which he was willing to boast about, which were admittedly his, were his weaknesses, that is, the things which his enemies considered his weaknesses. If he had been strong, as they viewed the matter, those persecutions and other sources of grief would not have had a place in his life. It will be remembered that Job's three friends, who came to comfort him in his distress, felt the

same way about that great man. (Cf. Job 2: 11-13; 4: 7; 8: 20.)

A Word of Explanation (2 Cor. 11: 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 heareth from me.

It appears from this section of the lesson text that Paul was telling the Corinthians that if he should decide to boast, that is, should actually glory with reference to his experiences and accomplishments, that he would have ample grounds for doing so, and that he could name instances which would merit such praise. It would not be necessary for him to resort to imaginary cases, but that he could relate many wonderful experiences, while remaining within the confines of truth. However, Paul explains his reason for not glorying with regard to his own rich experiences and achievements. Phillips renders this passage in these words: "If I should want to boast I should certainly be no fool to be proud of my experiences, and I should be speaking nothing but the sober truth. Yet I am not going to do so, for I don't want anyone to think more highly of me than his experience of me and what he hears of me should warrant."

Humbling Experience—an Antidote to Pride (2 Cor. 11: 7-10)

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, that I should not be exalted overmuch.

Paul's thorn in the flesh is one of the mysteries of the Bible, which has remained so, despite the ingenious efforts of men to explain it. Other translations may help us to realize more effectively the force of the passage. "And because the revelations were of such surpassing grandeur—therefore, lest I should be over-elated there was given me a thorn in the flesh, Satan's angel to deal blows at me, lest I should be over-elated." (Weymouth.) "So, to keep me from being overelated, there was sent upon

me a physical disease, sharp as a piercing stake, a messenger of Satan, to continue afflicting me, and so to keep me, I repeat, from being over-elated." (Williams.) "So tremendous, however, were the revelations that God gave me that, in order to prevent my becoming absurdly conceited, I was given a physical handicap—one of Satan's angels—to harass me and effectually stop any conceit." (Phillips.)

The "revelations" referred to in verse 7 are evidently identical with those mentioned in verse 1. These revelations were so surpassing in grandeur, so resplendent in glory, as to cause Paul to meditate on them and rise to great heights of self-exaltation, if there were nothing to prevent it; but God, who does all things well, permitted some kind of bodily infirmity, or something which Paul called a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to take hold of him and draw his thoughts and attention to his earthly state, with the result that his earthly life and heavenly thoughts were brought into balance. This no doubt was the result of the overruling providence of God; and it was in keeping with that which Paul says in Rom. 8: 28: "And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose." The Christian life is both contemplative and practical; and God does not want his people to be completely occupied with either extreme.

The original word for "thorn" is *skolops*, and it is found nowhere else in the New Testament. Its classical meaning, according to Liddell and Scott, is anything pointed, a pale, a stake, or thorn. The marginal reading in the American Standard Version of the New Testament is stake. None of this information is very helpful, so far as the passage is concerned; and the best that we can do is simply to accept Paul's statement to the effect that some kind of malady, which he attributed to Satan, afflicted him to the extent that his spiritual thoughts were brought into balance with his earthly mission. (Cf. Num. 33: 55 for an Old Testament example of the use of the word.) It is worthy of notice that Paul mentions "an infirmity of the flesh" in Gal. 4: 13; and since there

is such a close parallel between that letter and the one we are now considering, it is quite possible that the Galatian reference is identical with the thorn in the flesh. Both mention "the flesh" as being the place of the trouble, which makes it almost certain that it was some kind of physical trouble. New Testament references to Paul's eyes have led some Bible students to think that the affliction was ophthalmia, that is, an inflammation of the eye. Farrar is all but certain that that was the trouble. But whatever it was, the experience was humiliating to Paul. (Cf. Job's affliction and the humiliating effect it had on him; and we do know that it was brought on by Satan.)

Concerning this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. 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. 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.

Frederick W. Robertson has noted that since Paul did not tell what the thorn was, the important thing is not its identity, but the manner in which he dealt with it. His first reaction, so far as the record goes, was to pray; and the Bible tells us that he prayed three times. Paul's experience here was similar to that of Christ in Gethsemane. Both prayed three times that they might be delivered from a great ordeal, but in neither instances was the specific petition granted; but the New Testament clearly says that God heard both prayers, and we know that he granted strength to both which was equal to the trial in hand. (Cf. Heb. 5: 7; Deut. 33: 25b; Phil. 4: 19.)

Paul's whole concern was to do the will of God, and when he discovered what that will was, he went forward in it, regardless of the cost. It should be observed that Paul took pleasure in suffering, only if it were for Christ's sake. This great motivation in his life explains why he could sing praises to God while suffering in a dungeon prison (Acts 16: 25), and why he labored more abundantly

dantly than all the others (1 Cor. 15: 10) in carrying the gospel to all men. Where some people resignedly assert that "what can't be cured must be endured," Paul joyfully exclaims, "I take pleasure in anything, so long as it is for Christ's sake."

When Paul said, "For when I am weak, then am I strong," he was stating a paradox which is part and

parcel of the Christian religion. In the words of Matthew Henry, "When we are weak in ourselves, then we are strong in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; when we see ourselves weak in ourselves, then we go out of ourselves to Christ, and we are qualified to receive strength from him, and experience most of the supplies of divine strength and grace."

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?
Repeat the golden text.
Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Why did Paul have to spend so much time defending himself and his apostleship?
What blessing has come to us from that fact?
Why was the church in Corinth such a representative one for this kind of instruction?
Why were the enemies of Paul able to interfere with his work so much?

Further Grounds for Glorifying

Why did Paul need further grounds for glorifying?
How did he feel about the matter of boasting?
What did he mean by saying that he would come to visions and revelations?
Who was the "man in Christ" about whom Paul spoke? Give reasons for your answer.
What probable reason did Paul have for not mentioning his name?
What are the known facts of Paul's great experience as related here?
When did the visions and revelations probably take place?
What was the apparent reason for them?
What is meant by the expression "the third heaven"?
In what sense is the term "Paradise" used here?
What did Paul say that he heard in heaven?
In what sense were the words "unspeakable"?
Why was it unlawful to utter them?

What unique position did the experience of this lesson give Paul?
Why would Paul glory on behalf of such a one?
What did he mean by his "weaknesses"?

A Word of Explanation

What was Paul's word of explanation here?
Give his reason for forbearing to glory.

Humbling Experience—an Antidote to Pride

What ever remains true of Paul's thorn in the flesh?
Discuss some of the various translations of the passage regarding it.
What *revelations* were these?
Why was Paul in danger of being lifted up with pride regarding them?
What was the Lord's method of preventing this?
What important lesson should we learn from this?
What is the meaning of the term "thorn"?
To what source did Paul ascribe it?
In what sense was it a messenger of Satan?
What possible light does the Galatian letter throw on the question of Paul's thorn in the flesh?
What is the important question regarding Paul's thorn in the flesh?
Was Paul's prayer regarding the removal of the thorn answered?
What important lesson regarding prayer do we learn from this?
Why was Paul so cheerful in the midst of persecutions?
Why did he glory in weaknesses, etc.?
Why was Paul strong when he was weak?
What should this lesson mean to us?

Lesson XII—December 22, 1963

SIGNS OF AN APOSTLE

Lesson Text

2 Cor. 12: 11-21

11 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.

12 Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, by signs and wonders and mighty works.

13 For what is there wherein ye

were made inferior to the rest of the churches, except it be that I myself was not a burden to you? forgive me this wrong.

14 Behold, this is the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be a burden to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

15 And I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I love you more abundantly, am I loved the less?

16 But be it so, I did not myself burden you; but, being crafty, I caught you with guile.

17 Did I take advantage of you by any one of them whom I have sent unto you?

18 I exhorted Ti'-tus, and I sent the brother with him. Did Ti'-tus take any advantage of you? walked we not in the same spirit? *walked we* not in the same steps?

19 Ye think all this time that we are excusing ourselves unto you. In

the sight of God speak we in Christ. But all things, beloved, *are* for your edifying.

20 For I fear, lest by any means, when I come, I should find you not such as I would, and should myself be found of you such as ye would not; lest by any means *there should be* strife, jealousy, wraths, factions, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults;

21 Lest again when I come my God should humble me before you, and I should mourn for many of them that have sinned heretofore, and repented not of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they committed.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“The seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.” (1 Cor. 9: 2.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gal. 1: 11-24.

Daily Bible Readings

December 16. M.	Original Twelve (Luke 6: 12-19)
December 17. T.	Matthias, an Apostle (Acts 1: 15-26)
December 18. W.	Paul Called to Be an Apostle (Acts 26: 2-23)
December 19. T.	Apostle Born Out of Due Time (1 Cor. 15: 1-11)
December 20. F.	Powers of an Apostle (Acts 8: 14-24)
December 21. S.	Paul's Work as an Apostle (Acts 20: 17-35)
December 22. S.	Paul's Mission (Acts 22: 3-21)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Written from Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

The place and work of *apostles* are unique in the ministry of Christ and his church. Early in his great Galilean ministry, Jesus selected the first men who were to serve in that capacity. According to Luke, “And it came to pass in these days, that he went out into the mountain to pray; and he continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called his disciples; and he chose from them twelve, whom also he named apostles.” (Luke 6: 12, 13.) This is enough to show that the term “apostle” is something in addition to disciple. The primary meaning of disciple is a learner or follower, while an apostle is one who is sent. *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* notes that “Our English word is a transliteration of the Greek *apostolos*, which is derived from *apostellein*, to send. Whereas several words for *send* are used in the NT, expressing such ideas as dispatch, release, or dismiss, *apostellein* emphasizes the element

of commission—authority of and responsibility to the sender. So an apostle is properly one sent on a definite mission, in which he acts with full authority on behalf of the sender and is accountable to him.” (P. 57.)

The number of apostles who were selected by Jesus as he began the second year of his ministry (the first year was spent largely in Judaea and is covered more in detail by the first four chapters of John) was twelve; and while the Lord “named” them apostles, they are more often called disciples in the Gospel records, evidently due to the fact that their primary function during the Lord's earthly ministry was to be with him and to learn of him. They were, however, also called apostles during that period; for they were sent on definite missions then. (Cf. Mark 3: 14, 15; 6: 30.) The number “twelve” is sometimes associated with the twelve tribes of Israel, and that may have

been the reason for limiting the number to twelve. (Cf. Matt. 19: 28; Rev. 21: 10-14.) The number was reduced to eleven upon the defection and death of Judas; but before they began their active ministry as the Lord's plenipotentiary representatives, as set forth in the Book of Acts, Matthias was chosen to replace Judas (Acts 1: 23-26); but when James was put to death by Herod (Acts 12: 1, 2), no effort was made to select a successor to him.

At a later date, and sometime after the coronation of Christ, Paul was selected to be an apostle, with these distinctive features: (1) He saw the glorified Christ, and received his appointment directly from him (Gal. 1: 1); and (2) the Gentile world was allocated to him as his primary sphere of labor (Gal. 1: 16; 2: 8; Rom. 1: 5; 15: 16.) Paul's apostleship, while constantly called in question or denied by Judaizing teachers, was, nevertheless, fully recognized by the apostles in Jerusalem (Gal. 2:6-10); and he made it perfectly clear that he was their equal in all respects. None of the twelve ever questioned Paul's authority, so far as the record reveals. (Cf. Gal. 2: 11-14; 2 Pet. 3:

15, 16.) In discussing the role of the apostles in their mission to the world, Paul says, "But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

"We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God." (2 Cor. 5: 18-20.) The Lord makes it plain in Matthew 19: 28 that this ministry will continue throughout his mediatorial reign. (Cf. 1 Cor. 15: 24-28.) James the Lord's brother was also considered an apostle (Gal. 1: 19; cf. 1 Cor. 15: 7; Acts 15: 13; 21: 18; Gal. 2: 9, 11, 12.) Barnabas is called an apostle, along with Paul; but that evidently has reference to his being sent by the church in Antioch, as were Epaphroditus (Phil. 2: 25) and those referred to in 2 Cor. 8: 23). The original word for "apostle" is used in both of these last citations (see marginal note in both places). Jesus himself is called an apostle in Heb. 3: 1.

The Golden Text

"The seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord." The original word for "seal," as used in this text means, according to Arndt-Gingrich, that which confirms, attests, or authenticates: and it is as if Paul had said, "You are the certification of my apostleship." The Judaizers consistently denied Paul's apostleship, and made it necessary for him to affirm his apostolic status frequently, especially in Corinth and Galatia. Bible students are not agreed regarding the exact connection, if any, between his arguments in chapter 8, in which he sets forth the general principles to be followed by the strong with reference to their "rights," and that which is said in chapter 9; but it appears quite probable that Paul's aim is to show how the principle of loving self-denial was exemplified in his own life, as well as to present a defense of his apostleship.

It is evident from 2 Cor. 11: 20 that the false teachers who came to Corinth in Paul's absence expected financial support from the church

there, which Paul describes as "devoareth you," that is your property (cf. Mark 12: 40); but they were somewhat embarrassed by Paul's example of accepting nothing for his services. This required that they do something to justify their own action, which they did by asserting that Paul was not a true apostle, as evidenced by his failure or refusal to demand or accept the wages which were due an apostle. Paul's answer to this charge is contained in the context of the golden text: "Am I not free? am I not an apostle? have I not seen Jesus our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, yet at least I am to you; for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord. My defence to them that examine me is this." (1 Cor. 9: 1-3.)

We learn from 1 Cor. 12: 2 that the church in Corinth was made up of Gentiles; and since the church there was founded by Paul (Acts 18: 1-11; 1 Cor. 3: 5-9), who was the God-appointed apostle to the Gentiles (Rom

15: 15, 16), the inevitable conclusion, then, was and is that he was an apostle, at least to them. McGarvey and Pendleton, in commenting in this, note that this is "*an argumentum ad hominem*." Whatever Paul might be in the estimation of Judaizers and enemies, he must still be held as an apostle by those who

owed their spiritual life to him, for if he were no apostle, they were no Christians, and *vice versa*. As the seal vouched for the genuineness and validity of the document to which it was attached, so these Corinthian converts by their existence vouched for Paul's apostleship." (Cf. 1 Cor. 4: 14, 15.)

The Text Explained

The Corinthians Were Responsible for Paul's "Foolish" Boasting

2 Cor. 12: 11-13)

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 apostle, though I am nothing. Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, by signs and wonders and mighty works. For what is there wherein ye were made inferior to the rest of the churches, except it be that I myself was not a burden to you? forgive me this wrong.

Instead of being put to the necessity of defending himself, Paul should have been commended by the Corinthians who knew him so well and who had been so greatly benefited by his labors among them; but since they had failed in their own responsibility, they were guilty of forcing Paul to pursue a course which he freely admitted was foolish. There are brethren today who are wont to criticize others for that which they call foolishness, but if they would only stop and consider the facts in the case, they would, in many instances, find that they themselves are responsible for the very conduct to which they object. This is a forceful example of the truth which Paul expressed in his letter to the Romans, namely, no man lives to himself. If each individual Christian would render to each man his just dues, he would thereby, in many cases, cause them to manifest an entirely different attitude.

In saying that he was not behind the very chiefest apostles in anything, Paul had reference to the false apostles among the Judaizers. (Cf. 2 Cor. 11: 13.) The original word for "chiefest" is *hyperlian*, and it means, according to *Hubdt-Gingrich*, "super." Robertson calls those to whom Paul refers to "the super-extra apostles."

Williams renders the last part of verse 11 in these words: "For I am not a single bit inferior to your surpassingly superior apostles, though really I am 'nobody.'" In saying that he was "nothing," Clarke thinks that Paul had reference to the estimate which the false apostles and the Corinthians, who followed their lead, placed upon him. His words are: "Though I have been thus set at naught by your false apostle; and though, in consequence of what he has said, some of you have been ready to consider me as *nothing*—what we call *good for nothing*. This must be the meaning of the apostle, as the following verses prove." There are other commentators who are inclined to agree with Clarke, while still others feel that Paul was simply expressing his deep humility. (Cf. 1 Cor. 15: 9; 1 Tim. 1: 15.)

After the remark regarding the "superlative apostles" (*The New English Bible*), Paul reminds the Corinthian brethren that the "signs," that is, the distinguishing marks, or, as Williams has it, "the marks that signify the genuine apostle were exhibited among you." This, of course, left the Corinthians without any excuse; for they themselves could have borne witness to Paul's testimony. It was their failure to do so which forced Paul into that which he calls foolish boasting. The fact that these signs "were wrought among you," was, as Vincent observes, decisive testimony. The signs of the true apostle are described by Paul as being (1) *signs*, that is demonstrated proof that God was with him (cf. John 3: 1, 2); (2) *wonders*, the effect which the deeds had on them; (3) *mighty works*, the outward expression of miraculous power (cf. Acts 2: 22; 2 Thess. 2: 9; Heb. 2: 4). The signs, wonders, and mighty works were all miracles; they are simply viewed from different aspects. Not only were these signs wrought among

the Corinthians; they were performed under very trying circumstances, that is under "every kind of patience" (Arndt-Gingrich), or perseverance. This was necessary because of the circumstances under which Paul was compelled to labor while in Corinth — support himself and endure active opposition from those who were without. No one can read the eleventh chapter of Second Corinthians without seeing that Paul labored under distressing conditions.

Having pointed out to the Christians in Corinth that they had not suffered in any way because of a lack of signs of an apostle in him, Paul next asks them wherein they were placed at a disadvantage toward others churches, except it be with reference to the fact that he supported himself. Alford thinks that Paul's question here was asked in bitter irony, while Barnes notes that this verse (13) contains a striking mixture of sarcasm and irony, not exceeded, says Bloomfield by any example in Demosthenes. Paul had given the church in Corinth ample proof of his apostolic commission, and had conferred upon them the highest favors of his apostolic office; but he had not burdened them with his personal maintenance, and he ironically asks that they forgive him that wrong! Robertson notes that this is "consummate irony to the stingy element in this church." Paul knew that it was best for him not to take any financial support from the Corinthians, but that reason was not to the credit of the church there. (Cf. 2 Cor. 11: 9.) Any church which is able to do so will certainly find itself in a poor light, if it fails to support those who minister to it under its direction. If such a church's attitude is such as to make it wise for the worker not to accept support, then that is all the worse for the church.

"Not Yours, but You"

(2 Cor. 12: 14-18)

Behold, this is the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be a burden to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. And I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I love you more abundantly, am I lotted the less?

This is another example of Paul's use of great motives in dealing with the problems in everyday living; and the principle which is embodied in his words "not yours, but you" lies at the foundation, not only of Christianity, but is involved in the very nature of man. As some one has observed, man's affections are framed with reference to others, and he attains to true manhood in exactly the measure in which he seeks and loves others, not for what they have, but for what they are. This is clearly seen in the attitude of little children toward their parents, and it must be true of adults, if they are not to become selfish. It is true that a person may seek the friendship of another because of what he has; but if his heart is right, he will come to love his friend for what he is, even though he may lose that which he possesses. It is then that he finds himself in a higher world, in which he can truly say, "I seek not yours, but you." The true life of a man is realized only on this principle, "where heart seeks to meet with heart, and thought leaps forth to wed with thought."

Anyone who reads Paul's repeated remarks about not accepting support from the Corinthian church will sooner or later realize that there was a basic reason for it; and that the reason was not to the credit of the church itself, as has already been suggested. But even so, Paul loved the church in Corinth, and he was telling the truth when he said that he would gladly spend and be spent for their welfare. Paul also loved the church in Philippi, but he never intimated to them that he would not accept support from them. (Read the Book of Philippians.) The apostle's attitude toward his "children" (1 Cor. 4: 14, 15) is comparable to that of the parents of an unappreciative child. His language in the passage now before us is that of injured love.

In the words of The Speaker's Bible, "When men are self-seeking, mere comfort, ease, wealth, position are too generally their only aim. Such an aim never carries men out of themselves into self-forgetful action. Their entire affections, sentiments, ideals are yoked to the car of self; and the very powers which were given in order to carry us out

of ourselves are perverted, and aggravate the disease of selfishness which they should in large measure have proved the means of destroying. Under such conditions works of public benevolence may be done, but they are robbed of all merit by the motive which inspired them. If a selfish nature lends itself to a charitable action, its activity is due to the desire to gain credit with the conventional righteousness of the day. If it prays against temptation its real dread is of falling into social indiscretions, and if it would be delivered from evil, it is the evil, not of wrongdoing, but of loss, or pain, or the scorn of men."

But be it so, I did, not myself burden you; but, being crafty, I caught with guile. Did I take advantage of you by any one of them whom I have sent unto you? I exhorted Titus, and I sent the brother with him. Did Titus take any advantage of you? walked we not in the same spirit, walked we not in the same steps?

William renders verses 16-18 in these words: "But let it be granted, you say, that I never received from you financial support, yet, you say, by being a trickster I cheated you by my cunning. I did not make any money out of you through anybody that I sent to you, did I? I actually begged Titus to go, and sent the well-known brother with him. Titus did not make any money out of you, did he? Did not he and I act in the same spirit, and take the very same steps?"

Thus, the Corinthians, following the lead of the Judaizers, charged Paul with duplicity. They were willing to grant that he did not take any money from them for himself, but being "crafty," that is, sly and unprincipled, or versatile in devices—"ready to do anything," I "pulled the wool over your eyes" and got the money through deceit, that is, I received my pay from the collection which was supposedly to be used for the poor. But Paul stoutly denied the charge, and virtually called upon them, by a series of questions, to admit the same. We do not know just when Titus went to Corinth for the purpose here named, nor who the brother was who accompanied him; but it was probably prior to the journey which Titus made to "complete in you this grace also."

(See 2 Cor. 8: 6.) It is a sad thing to contemplate that there are still brethren who will take up some inuendo of an unscrupulous person, and convert it into a virtual charge against an innocent person. The Lord, of course, will deal appropriately with all such ungodly people.

The Real Purpose of Paul's Glorifying (2 Cor. 12: 19-21)

Ye think all this time that we are excusing ourselves unto you. In the sight of God speak we in Christ. But all things, beloved, are for your edifying. For I fear, lest by any means, when I come, I should find you not such as I would, and should myself be found of you such as ye would not; lest by any means there should be strife, jealousy, wraths, factions, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults; lest again when I come my God should humble me before you, and I should mourn for many of them that have sinned heretofore, and repented not of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they committed.

Paul did not want the Corinthians to have the idea that he was merely defending himself before them as judges; his aim was much higher than that. Instead of continuing his apologetic boasting, he now speaks with apostolic authority—the truth of God as it is in Christ; and that for their benefit. In the words of Olshausen, "Many of these Corinthian Christians did not sufficiently and deeply enough abhor their earlier heathen abominations; therefore he wished to inspire them with a feeling of sincere repentance, and to find it evinced by their conduct when he presented himself at Corinth." There was nothing which made Paul happier than to know that those whom he had converted to Christ were walking in the way of righteousness (cf. 2 John 4); and nothing gave him greater sorrow than to know that his labor had been in vain.

The long list of sins set forth in verse 20 were evidently those which the Corinthians had been committing during his absence. (1) *Strife*, discord, contention; (2) *jealousy*, the intolerance of a rival, such as those who possessed that which some considered greater gifts—envy; (3) *wraths*, outbursts of anger; (4) *factions*. party strife, contentiousness;

(5) *backbitings*, evil speaking, slander; (6) *whisperings*, secret gossip, tale-bearing; (7) *swellings*, puffed, proud, conceited; (8) *tumults*, disorderly, unruly. It was Paul's aim to correct this unholy and godless condition in the Corinthian church; and that was

the purpose of the "painful letter" which he was writing to them. His hope was that he would not be compelled to mourn for those who had not repented of their sins: therefore it was his intention to bring about their repentance before his arrival.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Who were the apostles and what was their place in the earthly ministry of Christ?
Under what circumstance were the twelve selected?
What is the difference between an apostle and a disciple?
What was the work of the apostles in the early church?
What was the probable reason for selecting twelve men to be apostles?
Under what circumstances was Paul made an apostle?
Was there any difference between his authority and that of the twelve? Give reasons for your answer.
What authority do the apostles of Christ have today?

The Golden Text

In what sense did Paul use the word "seal" in the text now before us?
Why did he refer to the Corinthians as the seal of his apostleship?
Why did Paul need to discuss the question of financial support at that time?
Why did Paul say that he was at least an apostle to the Corinthians?

The Corinthians Were Responsible for Paul's "Foolish" Boasting

In what way were the Christians in Corinth responsible for Paul's glorying?
What important lesson should we learn from this?
Show how people are often responsible for the conduct of others.
Who were the "very chiefest apostles" to whom Paul referred?
In what sense was he not behind them?
Why did Paul say that he was "nothing"?
What did he mean by the "signs" of an apostle?
What were these signs?

Why were they spoken of as signs, wonders, and mighty works?
What did Paul mean by saying that these miracles were wrought among them in all patience?
In what only were the Corinthians inferior to the other churches?
Why was this true of them?

"Not Yours, but You"

On what basis did Paul handle the problem of dealing with the question of financial support?
What would be the result of this fundamental principle in human relationships were followed?
Why did Paul refuse support from the Corinthians, while accepting it from other churches?
What difference does the attitude of a church have in this respect?
What is usually the aim of self-seeking?
What effect will such an attitude have on an individual?
What "veiled charge" was made against Paul with respect to financial support?
In what way did he reply to it?
What important lesson should we learn from this circumstance?

The Real Purpose of Paul's Glorying

What impression did Paul seek to correct in the minds of the Corinthian brethren?
What change is noted here in his address to them? Why?
What was the basic trouble with the Corinthians themselves?
What was Paul's attitude toward his labors in the Lord?
Why did he mention the long list of sins in verse 20?
Discuss the meaning of all eight of them.
What was Paul's hope before his arrival in Corinth?
Why is repentance so necessary?
Why should every gospel preacher and every Christian, as for that matter, endeavor to bring offenders to repentance?

Lesson XIII—December 29, 1963

ADMONITION AND FAREWELL

Lesson Text

2 Cor. 13: 1-14

1 This is the third time I am coming to you. At the mouth of two witnesses or three shall every word be established.

2 I have said beforehand, and I do say beforehand, as when I was present the second time, so now, being absent,

to them that have sinned heretofore, and to all the rest, that, if I come again, I will not spare;

3 Seeing that ye seek a proof of Christ that speaketh in me; who to you-ward is not weak, but is powerful in you:

4 For he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth through the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him through the power of God toward you.

5 Try your own selves, whether ye are in the faith; prove your own selves. Or know ye not as to your own selves, that Je'-sus Christ is in you? unless indeed ye be reprobate.

6 But I hope that ye shall know that we are not reprobate.

7 Now we pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we may appear approved. but that ye may do that which is honorable, though we be as reprobate.

8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

9 For we rejoice, when we are

weak, and ye are strong: this we also pray for, even your perfecting.

10 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.

11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfected; be comforted; be of the same mind; live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

12 Salute one another with a holy kiss.

13 All the saints salute you.

14 The grace of the Lord Je'-sus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good."*
(Rom. 12: 9.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rom. 12: 1, 2.

Daily Bible Readings

December 23.	M.....	Paul's Farewell at Miletus (Acts 20: 36-38)
December 24.	T.....	Farewell at Miletus (Acts 27: 7-9)
December 25.	W.....	Christ's Leave of the Disciples (Acts 1: 6-11)
December 26.	T.....	Paul's Final Words (2 Tim. 4: 1-22)
December 27.	F.....	Jacob's Dying Message (Gen. 49: 1-23)
December 28.	S.....	Joseph's Final Message (Gen. 50: 22-26)
December 29.	S.....	Joshua's Farewell Address (Josh. 24: 1-27)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Written from Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

Letter writing at its best is a work of art, requiring great skill; and anyone who has studied Paul's letters is aware of the fact that he was a master of the art. Two of the principal purposes of letter writing, when properly done, are (1) the communication of information, or the making known of that which is in the writer's mind; and (2) the creation of an atmosphere which will be conducive to a favorable reaction, from the writer's viewpoint, on the part of the receiver. When both of these components are skillfully executed, a favorable response on the part of the recipient is more often the result than otherwise. This therefore should cause letter-writers to give careful attention (1) to what they say, and (2) to the manner in which they say it, that is, if they want favorable and definite results from their communications.

A graduate student of psychology was, while pursuing his studies in college, employed by an advertising firm to do some work for the company. All the arrangements were made orally, and there was therefore no tangible record which could be appealed to in case of a question with reference to the agreement. After the psychologist had finished the work for which he was due two hundred and fifty dollars, the man who hired him suddenly passed away. It was later discovered that this executive had made known to no other member of the firm the terms of the arrangements which he had made with the graduate student. The psychologist needed the money which was due him, and it was entirely up to him to convince the company that he was entitled to the amount in question. He decided that a letter would probably be the best way to deal

with the problem, the mechanics of which would require some ten or fifteen minutes. But this man knew both the meaning and the importance of letter writing, and he, accordingly, took about one half a day from his busy schedule to compose the message which he planned to send to the company; and the results were both satisfactory and rewarding.

The desperate situation which developed in Corinth, following the receipt of Paul's epistle to the brethren there, known to us as First Corinthians, demanded prompt and vigorous action on the part of the apostle, if the work in that city were to be preserved for Christ. The Judaizers had moved in, and they had all but wrested the leadership of the church there from Paul. Something had to be done, and he, too, decided to write another letter. This letter would have to be both strong and pointed, or, to state the same thing in other words, the Corinthian brethren would have to be brought to their senses (cf. Luke 15: 17)—they would have to see themselves as they really were in God's sight. How could that best be accomplished? Paul (and he was inspired) decided on irony and sarcasm; and it would be difficult to find a more impressive example this type

of letter than that which is contained in Paul's sorrowful epistle to his beloved Corinthians. But it is a recorded fact that Paul's painful letter accomplished the very result which he intended. (Read 2 Cor. 7: 8-16.)

But irony and sarcasm do not tell the full story of Paul's sorrowful letter to the Corinthians; it also contains words of admonition and assurances of his deep and abiding interest in their welfare. It was necessary for him to "reprove them sharply" (Tit. 1: 13; cf. Tim. 3: 16, 17), but he made them understand that his motive was pure and that the reprimand which he was administering was prompted by love and was for their own good. Some professed Christians apparently think that they are entirely justified, or maybe they think that they are doing a smart thing, in sternly rebuking others, and then leaving them to writhe in their humiliation or perhaps deep resentment and anger, with no thought on the rebuker's part of any effort to make better people out of them. (Cf. Rom. 12: 17-21.) People who are guilty of this kind of conduct will, of course, have to answer to God for it in the last day. (Cf. Luke 17: 1-4.)

The Golden Text

"Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." The words which serve as our golden text for today are taken from a section in Romans (12: 9-21) in which Paul discusses the individual and social duties of Christians, as they endeavor to live for the Lord here among men. The paragraph begins with these words: "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." This is one of the basic duties of the Christian life. Phillips renders the verse in these words: "Let us have no imitation Christian love. Let us have a genuine break with evil and a real devotion to good." Williams puts the passage in these words: "Your love must be true. You must always turn in horror from what is wrong, but keep on holding to what is right." As indicated by the latter rendering, the original words for both "abhor" and "cleave" are present participles and indicate continuous action, that is, keep on abhor-

ring the evil; and keep on cleaving to that which is good. It is only in this way that love can be genuine, that is, without hypocrisy.

The original word for "abhor" occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, but its meaning—hate, detest, abominate, loathe—is both clear and distinct. But the original term for "cleave" is found in the New Testament several times. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh." (Matt. 19: 5.) "And he went and joined [literally, glued] himself to one of the citizens of that country." (Luke 15: 15; cf. 1 Cor. 6: 16, 17.) This shows that there must be the closest possible union between the Christian and that which is good. This same truth is taught in other parts of the Bible, in both the Old and the New Testaments. "Hate the evil, and love the good." (Amos 5: 15.) "Thou hast loved righteousness.

and hated iniquity; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." (Heb. 1: 9.) This therefore is a basic duty in the economy of God. David Lipscomb, in commenting on the passage now before us, says,

"View with horror and dread and shrink from every evil deed as from a deadly poison. Wrongdoing is the poison of the soul. It unfits for heaven and educates for eternal ruin. A man cannot love and honor the good from the heart without detesting the evil. He must come to abhor it in himself as in others [cf.

Luke 14: 26]. If it is wrong that he must abhor, he will abhor it in himself more than in others David says: 'Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.' (Psalm 119: 104.) To abhor wrong does not carry with it the hating of the wrongdoer. He will try to deliver him from the wrongdoing. So a man who loves himself and hates wrong will seek to deliver himself from wrongdoing. A Christian has no right to be neutral between right and wrong. He is under the same obligation to oppose the wrong that he is to maintain the right. But he must do it in the proper manner."

The Text Explained

A Promise to Deal Vigorously with Offenders

(2 Cor. 13: 1-4)

This is the third time I am coming to you. At the mouth of two witnesses or three shall every word be established. I have said beforehand, and I do say beforehand, as when I was present the second time, so now, being absent, to them that have sinned heretofore, and to all the rest, that, if I come again, I will not spare: seeing that ye seek a proof of Christ that speaketh in me; who to you-ward is not weak, but is powerful in you: for he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth through the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him through the power of God toward you.

From the recorded facts of the history of the church in Corinth, it is fair to conclude that the brethren there were never a settled and easy going group of people. Paul remained in that city for eighteen months, and notwithstanding the apostolic example and instruction which the brethren there had, the Greek mind in religion continued to manifest itself in all of its tireless effervescent vivacity and vigor. And judging from Paul's correspondence with them, his patience with them must have been severely tested on numerous occasions. The situation before us at the beginning of our lesson for today must have been just such an occasion. The time had arrived when he would prepare for a final showdown. The Corinthians had compelled him to boast of his attainments, and now he, in effect,

tells them that they are also forcing the supreme test of power. Later on, Paul will solemnly affirm that it was to avoid just such a situation as the one he now proposes that he delayed his going to Corinth "But I call God for a witness upon my soul, that to spare you I forbore to come unto Corinth." (2 Cor. 1: 23.)

This third visit, therefore, will be characterized, not by patience, but by rigorous discipline. The apostle hastens to add, however, that everything shall be done in strict requirements of the law. A formal inquiry will be conducted, and sufficient witnesses will be called to establish an orderly procedure. (Cf. Deut. 19: 15; Matt. 18: 16; 1 Tim. 5: 19.) If brethren who undertake to enforce discipline would be as careful as Paul was to do the right thing in the matter, the results would be much more satisfactory. The marginal reading for "beforehand" is *plainly*, which has the effect of saying that he had and was forewarning them of what to expect. His first warning is probably the one found in 1 Cor. 4: 21; the second was made when he was with them the second time; and now the third is the one of this lesson. In our way of expressing the matter, Paul simply wanted the Corinthian brethren to know that he meant business; his patience was at the breaking point.

It should be observed that Paul's words were addressed "to them that have sinned heretofore, and to all the rest," that is, those who may not have actually sinned, but who were identified with the sinners, or

at least were under their influence (cf. Rev. 3: 1-4). It appears that practically the whole church in Corinth had rebelled against Paul's leadership. The reason for the test which Paul proposed to make in Corinth is stated in these words: "seeing that ye seek a proof of Christ that speaketh in me." Paul's words regarding Christ appear to be used in contrast with the claims which the Judizers were making, namely, Our Christ is strong and is the protector of the Jewish law, while the Christ which Paul preaches is the weak, crucified Christ. But in reply to this, Paul calls the Corinthians' attention to the fact that the Christ whom he preached was not weak toward them, either in his apostolic ministry (2 Cor. 12: 12; 1 Cor. 2: 4, 5), or in the bestowal of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 1: 7).

It is true that Jesus was crucified through weakness, that is, because of his human nature; but all of that was overcome by the resurrection, and he is now alive for evermore by the power of God (cf. Phil. 2: 5-11; 1 Pet. 3: 18). Verses 3, 4 of the text now before us are translated by Moffatt in these words. "That [that is, what he warned that he would do in verse 2] will prove to you that I am indeed a spokesman of Christ. It is no weak Christ you have to do with, but a Christ of power. For though he was crucified in his weakness, he lives by the power of God; and though I am weak as he was weak, you will find that I am alive as he is alive by the power of God." Just because Christian teachers manifest the spirit of Christ in dealing with some problems which they have to meet, there are some thoughtless brethren who seem to think that they are mere weaklings; but since no word of God ever returns to him void (Isa. 55: 10, 11), they will sooner or later discover that they have the Lord to deal with, rather than the faithful proclaimer of the divine message.

The Place Where the Testing Should
Begin

(2 Cor. 13: 5-10)

Try your own selves, whether ye are in the faith; prove your own selves. Or know ye not as to your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you? unless indeed ye be reprobate.

But I hope that ye shall know that we are not reprobate.

Paul's brethren in Corinth had been led by their false teachers to question his apostleship, along with his moral character, as we have already seen in previous studies; and at the time that Paul wrote his sorrowful letter to them, they were seeking a proof of Christ that spoke in him. The apostle assured them that the proof would be forthcoming when he arrived in their city, but he cautioned them that it would be much better for them if they would first examine themselves; for if Christ did not speak through him when they were converted, and during the time he ministered in their midst, then they would find that they themselves were not in the faith. The only alternative to this would be that they had proved themselves to be such as they should not be (Thayer; cf. 1 Cor. 9: 27, where the original word is rendered "rejected"). Paul had begotten the Corinthians through the gospel (1 Cor. 4: 15), and if he himself were not a true minister of Christ, it would certainly follow that they were not genuine Christians; and it was for this reason that Paul said, "But I hope that ye shall know that we are not reprobate." Or, to state the same thing in another way, Paul hoped that they would realize that he could meet the test which they desired. (Cf. Jer. 6: 30.)

Systematic self-examination with a view to correcting one's faults and estimating aright one's moral worth has long been recognized as a valuable exercise, in fact, indispensable if one expects to be pleasing to the Lord (Cf. Matt. 7: 1-5.) The Speaker's Bible calls attention to the fact that Seneca, who was contemporary with Paul, wrote of this very thing. His words are, "When the day was over and Sextius had gone to his night's rest, he used to ask his mind (*animum*): 'What bad habit of yours have you cured to-day? What vice have you resisted? In what respect are you better?' " When people, and especially Christians, pay more attention to improving their own lives and characters, they will have less time, and will be less inclined, to be judging others. It is, of course, perfectly proper to help other people become better; but, as Jesus points

out in his sermon on the mount, the place to begin such work in with one's self.

Now we pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we may appear approved, hut that ye may do that which is honorable, though we be as reprobate. For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. Fur we rejoice, when we are weak, and ye are strong: this we also pray for, even your perfecting. 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.

Paul, of course, had no doubt about his vindication, if and when the test which the Corinthians thought they wanted, and which he promised upon his arrival in their city, was made: but his prayer for them was that they might so deport themselves as to make his discipline wholly unnecessary. This was not in order to make it appear that his ministry toward them was accredited by its success, but because they were doing the right thing themselves. In the words of the Cambridge Bible, "S. Paul's whole heart is set upon the desire that the power of Christ which dwells in the Christian body should be displayed in the victory of his converts over evil, and this not for any personal ends of his own—not even in order that he might manifest the high estimation in which God holds him—but simply for the sake of him whose minister he is, and for their sake to whom he ministers to him."

In saying that they could do nothing against the truth, but for the truth, Paul, in effect, was saying that their well-doing and well-being were the aims in mind; and if they were accomplished before the discipline was necessary, the truth would be vindicated; and for him to act with any other motive in mind, that would be to fight against the truth, a thing which he could not do. The apostle therefore was willing to appear weak, if only the Corinthians would do right; and that was his fervent prayer for them. And he again reminds them that the purpose of the letter which he was sending them was to make any punishment for their conduct unnecessary. If every one who tries to correct evil would follow

Paul's example, more good would be accomplished; but, as any careful observer knows, there are brethren whose sole aim appears to be to convict those whom they oppose of wrongdoing, and then let the matter rest there.

Admonitions, Salutation, and
Benediction

(2 Cor. 13: 11-14)

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfected; be comforted; be of the same mind; live in peace: and the God of love and peace shall be with you. This verse is rendered by Goodspeed in these words: "Now brothers, goodbye! Be what you ought to be. listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace, and God the source of love and peace will be with you." It would certainly require a callous heart to remain insensible to a plea like that; and it is good to know that Paul's letter to the Corinthian brethren had the desired effect. (Read 2 Cor. 7: 8-16.)

Salute one another with a holy kiss. This exhortation is found, in addition to this instance, in the following places in the New Testament: Rom. 16: 16; 1 Cor. 16: 20; 1 Thess. 5: 26; and 1 Pet. 5: 14. The emphasis is not upon the kiss, but upon the "kind" of kiss. It was the custom of people in those days to greet each other (though probably men greeting men, and women greeting women) with a kiss. The apostles, in writing to the brethren, instructed them to make the kiss a holy one, or a kiss of love. Or, to state the same thing in other words, their greeting should be sincere. The Lord does not require his people to adhere to any particular custom, as such; but he does require sincerity in whatever they do. If handshaking had been the custom then, the inspired writers no doubt would have said, "Salute the brethren with a holy handshake, or a handshake of love."

All the saints salute you, that is, all the saints who were with Paul at the time of writing, or who knew of his writing.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. In commenting on this verse, Robertson says, "This benediction is the most complete of them all. It presents the persons of the

Trinity in full form." It appears from 2 Thess. 3: 17 that Paul closed all of his epistles with his own hand: "The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write." The Cambridge Bible notes that the benediction which we are now considering

came at the end of Paul's harshest epistle. The writer continues, "It must be regarded as the overflowing of a loving heart, conscious of the severity of the language the apostle has been compelled to use, yet deeply penetrated with a sense of its necessity for the well-being of the flock."

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What is involved in letter writing at its best? Why?
What is the purpose of a well-written letter?
Why should great time and effort be given to the composition of an important letter?
Why did Paul decide to write the letter we have been considering?
Discuss the aim which he had in mind.
Why did he use the type of language which it contains?
In what way did Paul "temper" his letter to the Corinthians?
What important lesson should we learn from this?

The Golden Text

From what context are the words of the golden text for today taken?
What does it mean to abhor evil, and cleave to that which is good?
What lesson do we learn from the grammatical structure of the passage?
Give a practical illustration of just how this injunction should be carried out by people of today.

A Promise to Deal Vigorously with Offenders

Give some idea of the type of people who made up the Corinthian church.
Why was a "showdown" with them necessary at the time of this lesson?
How did Paul prepare them for the impending test?
Who was involved in the situation now in hand?

Why did they want a proof of Christ that spoke in Paul?
What did Paul say regarding Christ?
What lesson should we learn from this?

The Place Where the Testing Should Begin

What great mistake were the Corinthian brethren making in seeking the test?
Why did Paul tell them to try themselves?
What was involved in that, as respects their discipleship?
Why is self-examination so important to us?
Give a practical plan for conducting it.
What prayer did Paul offer for the Corinthian brethren?
What was his motive in presenting it?
Discuss his feeling for his rebellious brethren.
What did Paul mean by his remark regarding the truth?
Why was he writing to the Corinthians then, instead of visiting them?

Admonitions, Salutation, and Benediction

What was Paul's final plea to the Corinthian Christians?
What effect did it have upon them?
Why say, "Salute one another with a holy kiss"?
What application, if any, does that injunction have for us?
Who were the saints who saluted the Corinthians?
What can you say regarding Paul's benediction, as reported here?
Why did Paul personally autograph his letters?
Discuss the appropriateness of the benediction now before us?