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

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# Teachers Annual Lesson Commentary

ON

UNIFORM BIBLE LESSONS

FOR THE

CHURCHES OF CHRIST

## 1964

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

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### FORTY-THIRD ANNUAL VOLUME

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## P R E F A C E

The lessons for 1964 are equally divided between the Old and New Testaments. Those in the Old Testament are taken from three of the major prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. All three of these prophets dealt with the apostasy of the Israelites, particularly with the southern kingdom, which led to their captivity, and their return to the homeland. But perhaps the most important emphasis which is found in these three prophecies was with reference to the coming Messiah and his kingdom. The new Israel is the church, and that is often the theme of the apostle Paul in the New Testament.

The New Testament lessons are from Paul's prison epistles, that is, the epistles which he wrote during his first Roman imprisonment, and Hebrews which he apparently wrote soon after his release from prison; and from the so-called pastoral letters, the ones which he wrote to Timothy and Titus. The appropriateness of these selections will be seen when we consider the fact that the prophets spoke of the coming kingdom or church, and Paul penned the greatest lessons which have ever been written regarding the church, especially those of Colossians and Ephesians; and the purpose in writing to Timothy and Titus was to show "how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth," or to "set in order the things that were wanting." (See 1 Tim. 3: 15; Tit. 1: 5.)

Certain principles have guided the author in preparing these lessons, and attention is herein called to some of them. (1) A uniform plan has been followed in all of them. This will enable the student to know what to expect, and those who care to do so, will find it relatively easy to use these lessons as the basis for public talks, in addition to their use in the classroom. In other words, preachers will find useful material, homiletically treated, for sermons at any time. (2) The golden text is supposed to embody the principle thought of the week's lesson, and it is for this reason that these texts are given rather full treatment. If one will get a thorough understanding of this part of the lesson, he will be better prepared to understand the principal text of the lesson. (3) The full and sometimes lengthy treatment of the lessons will enable all classes of students to have adequate information for profitable classroom discussion. Those who are relatively inexperienced in Bible study will be able to see the meaning of the text, while those who are familiar with the teaching of the Bible will be able to arrange the material for effective presentation and discussion. No successful teacher or student should ever be placed in a position of having to study or teach right up to the limit of his information.

This is the forty-third annual volume which the Gospel Advocate Company has published for use by churches of Christ; and the nineteenth 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.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## LESSONS FOR 1964

### FIRST QUARTER

Isaiah's Vision	Lesson I—January 5	Isa. 1: 1-9, 13-17
Isaiah's Call	Lesson II—January 12	Isa. 6.
Isaiah Predicts Christ's Glorious Reign.....	Lesson III—January 19	Isa. 11: 1-10
Isaiah's Song of Praise.....	Lesson IV—January 26	Isa. 25: 1-12
Isaiah Condemns Strong Drink.....	Lesson V—February 2	Isa. 28: 1-13
Isaiah's Picture of Zion .....	Lesson VI—February 9	Isa. 35: 1-10
God Comforts His People	Lesson VII—February 16	Isa. 40: 1-11
The Coming Messiah	Lesson VIII—February 23	Isa. 42: 1-10
The Suffering Saviour .....	Lesson IX—March 1	Isa. 53: 1-12
Christ's Gracious Invitation .....	Lesson X—March 8	Isa. 55: 1-13
Zion's Glory and New Name.....	Lesson XI—March 15	Isa. 62: 1-12
Jeremiah's Call and Commission.....	Lesson XII—March 22	Jer. 1: 1-10
Jeremiah Pleads for Obedience.....	Lesson XIII—March 29	Jer. 7: 1-11

### SECOND QUARTER

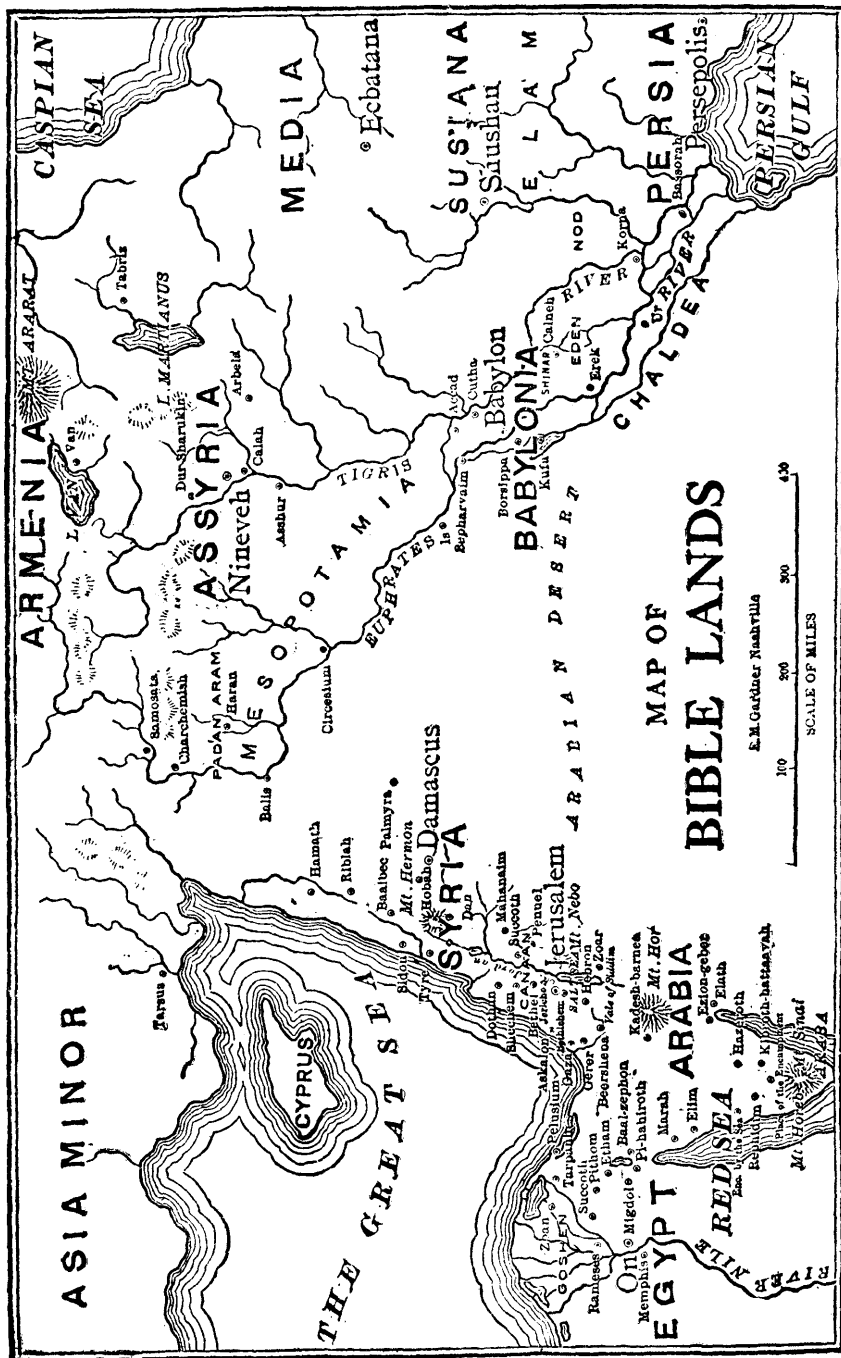
Paul, the Prisoner	Lesson I—April 5	Eph. 6: 18-20; Phil. 1: 12-14; Col. 4: 7-9, 18
Redeeming the Time	Lesson II—April 12	Eph. 5: 3-16
Christian Warfare	Lesson III—April 19	Eph. 6: 10-18; Phil. 1: 27-30
The Mind of Christ	Lesson IV—April 26	Phil. 2: 1-11
Warnings Regarding Dangerous Philosophies	Lesson V—May 3	Col. 2: 8-12, 16-23
Christ, Our Life	Lesson VI—May 10	Col. 3: 1-15
Paul Writes to His Friend Philemon	Lesson VII—May 17	Phile. 4-19
God Speaks through His Son	Lesson VIII—May 24	Heb. 1: 1-8; 2: 1-4
Christ's Priesthood.....	Lesson IX—May 31	Heb. 4: 14-16; 7: 26-28; 9: 24-28
Going on unto Perfection.....	Lesson X—June 7	Heb. 6: 1-10
A Better Covenant	Lesson XI—June 14	Heb. 8: 1-13
An Unmoveable Kingdom.....	Lesson XII—June 21	Heb. 12: 18-29
Christian Duties.....	Lesson XIII—June 28	Heb. 13: 1-16

### THIRD QUARTER

Jeremiah Weeps Over Zion.....	Lesson I—July 5	Jer. 9: 1-10
The Potter and the Clay.....	Lesson II—July 12	Jer. 18: 1-12
Jeremiah Condemns False Prophets	Lesson III—July 19	Jer. 23: 1-4, 13-18, 25-32
Jeremiah's Trial	Lesson IV—July 26	Jer. 26: 7-19
The New Covenant	Lesson V—August 2	Jer. 31: 27-37
Jeremiah in Prison	Lesson VI—August 9	Jer. 37: 11-21
Judgment upon Babylon.....	Lesson VII—August 16	Jer. 51: 33-40, 54-58
Ezekiel's Call and Commission	Lesson VIII—August 23	Ezek. 2: 1-10
Ezekiel a Watchman	Lesson IX—August 30	Ezek. 3: 12-21
Ezekiel Denounces the False Prophets.....	Lesson X—September 6	Ezek. 13: 1-7, 17-19, 22, 23
Promise of a New Heart	Lesson XI—September 13	Ezek. 36: 25-28
Ezekiel's Valley of Dry Bones	Lesson XII—September 20	Ezek. 37: 1-10
Jehovah's Glorious Temple	Lesson XIII—September 27	Ezek. 43: 1-12

### FOURTH QUARTER

Paul's First Letter to Timothy.....	Lesson I—October 4	1 Tim. 1: 1-11
Prayer and Modesty Enjoined	Lesson II—October 11	1 Tim. 2: 1-15
An Apostasy Foretold .....	Lesson III—October 18	1 Tim. 4: 1-11
Church's Duty to Widows.....	Lesson IV—October 25	1 Tim. 5: 3-16
A Charge to Timothy	Lesson V—November 1	1 Tim. 6: 11-21
Paul Writes a Second Letter to Timothy.....	Lesson VI—November 8	2 Tim. 1: 1-12
Strength in Grace .....	Lesson VII—November 15	2 Tim. 2: 1-13
Great Wickedness Predicted.....	Lesson VIII—November 22	2 Tim. 3: 1-13
Paul's Final Words	Lesson IX—November 29	2 Tim. 4: 9-18
Paul's Letter to Titus .....	Lesson X—December 6	Tit. 1: 1-5, 10-16
Sound Doctrine.....	Lesson XI—December 13	Tit. 2: 1-10
Duties of Gospel Preachers.....	Lesson XII—December 20	Tit. 3: 1-10
Paul's Regard for Timothy and Titus.....	Lesson XIII—December 27	Phil. 2: 19-24; Gal. 2: 1-5



# FIRST QUARTER

## THE MAJOR PROPHETS

### (First Half of Six Months' Course)

*AIM.—To acquaint ourselves with that period of Old Testament history when God spoke to his people through the Prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel; to observe the holy zeal for righteousness which influenced these men of God; and to imbibe the spirit of devotion which ever characterized them.*

Lesson I—January 5, 1964

## ISAIAH'S VISION

### Lesson Text

Isa. 1: 1-9, 13-17

1 The vision of I-sa'-iah the son of A'-moz, which he saw concerning Ju'-dah and Je-ru'-sa-lem, in the days of Uz-zi'-ah, Jo'-tham, A'-haz, and Hez-e-ki'-ah, kings of Ju'-dah.

2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for Je-ho'-vah hath spoken:

I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

3 The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; *but* Is'-ra-el doth not know, my people doth not consider.

4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that deal corruptly! they have forsaken Je-ho'-vah, they have despised the Holy One of Is'-ra-el, they are estranged *and gone back-*ward.

5 Why will ye be still stricken, that ye revolt more and more? the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

6 From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; *but* wounds, and bruises, and fresh stripes: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with oil.

7 Your country is desolate; your cities are burned with fire; your land,

strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers.

8 And the daughter of Zi'-on is left as a booth in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.

9 Except Je-ho'-vah of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sod'-om, we should have been like unto Go-mor'-rah.

13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; new moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies,—I cannot away with iniquity and the solemn meeting.

14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary of bearing them.

15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

16 Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

17 Learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Come now, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah (Isa. 1: 18.)

Devotional Reading.—Isa. 1: 21-31.

### Daily Bible Readings

December 30. M..... Daniel's Night Vision (Dan. 2: 17-24)  
 December 31. T..... Nebuchadnezzar's Visions (Dan. 4: 4-18)  
 January 1. W..... A Vision of the Kingdom (Dan. 7: 13, 14)  
 January 2. T..... Vision of Obediah (Obad. 1-21)

- January 3. F..... Vision on the Housetop (Acts 11: 1-10)  
 January 4. S..... Visions and Revelations (2 Cor. 12: 1-10)  
 January 5. S..... Paul's Vision (Acts 16: 6-10)

TIME.—Probably about 740 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Isaiah and God's sinful people.

## Introduction

In speaking of Isaiah, the editor of *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible* notes that the world knows but little about its greatest people. It beholds from afar the candle as it burns in the garret of the thinker, but does not know that its light will continue to burn on down through the ages. The man who lives in the realm of thought, rather than in the domain of action, is usually overlooked while he is yet alive. It is only when his thoughts have been translated into deeds, perhaps hundreds of years after his death, that the world cares to ask who the thinker was, and eagerly snatches at every detail of his personal history. A forceful illustration of this attitude is seen in the words of the dying Scottish poet, Robert Burns, to his weeping wife. The Ayrshire bard had been neglected by the patrons of his happier days, but with the hopefulness which made his genius so winsome in later times, he said to his sorrowing companion, "Dinna greet [do not weep] for me; I shall be thought far more of a hundred years hence than I am now."

There are but a few scraps of history, which may or may not be true, of "the myriad-minded" Shakespeare. Of Dante we know but little, and still less of Homer; and the same is true of Isaiah, "the sweetest and most impassioned of all the Hebrew poets." That which has just been said is true; for, in spite of the influence which he exercised upon his contemporaries, our knowledge of Isaiah's life is derived almost wholly from his own works. It is true that he is revealed in Second Kings, chapters 19, 20, as the counsellor to whom the troubled Jewish monarch sent his ministers in an hour of great need, as the prophet who was divinely commissioned to promise them speedy deliverance, as the healer who brought health and additional years to Hezekiah when all earthly hope for him appeared to be gone, and finally as the stern reprover of the Judean king for his

thoughtless conduct in showing the treasures of his house to the messengers of the Babylonian monarch. But this same information is also found in the book which bears Isaiah's name. The only additional information which we have regarding the prophet is found in 2 Chron. 26: 22; 32: 32, where he is revealed as the biographer of Uzziah and Hezekiah; but both of those books have been lost.

Isaiah was born about 760 B.C. He called his wife "the prophetess," and it appears that two sons were born to them. (See Isa. 8: 3; 7: 3.) They probably lived in Jerusalem. Isaiah was a child when Amos appeared at Bethel, and was a youth when Hosea began his prophecy in the northern kingdom. Micah was Isaiah's younger contemporary. In speaking of Isaiah, G. A. Smith says, "Although anticipated by Amos and Hosea in many of his leading doctrines, and excelled both by Jeremiah and the great Prophet of the Exile in depth of personal experience and width of religious outlook, Isaiah was nevertheless the greatest of the Hebrew prophets—by the strength of his personality, the wisdom of his statesmanship, the length and unbroken assurance of his ministry, the almost unaided service which he rendered to Judah at the greatest crisis of her history, the purity and grandeur of his style, and the influence he exerted on subsequent prophecy." (*Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. II, p. 485.)

The Book of Isaiah is second only to that of Jeremiah in actual length, and is just about equal that of Ezekiel. Many modern scholars think that the book, which bears Isaiah's name was written by several authors, and it is fashionable to speak of the contents of the book as First Isaiah (meaning the prophet now under consideration), chapters 1-39; Second or Deutero Isaiah, chapters 40-55; Third Isaiah, chapters 56-66. Other students speak only of First and Second Isaiah, thus combining "Second and



Third" Isaiah into a single book. But, as *The People's Bible Encyclopedia* observes, "The Vision of Isaiah," etc., has ever been applied to the whole book; that a second part has never been known to exist separately; that if separated those who joined them believed that they were both from Isaiah's pen; that a second Isaiah is unknown in history; that so

far from a fatal diversity of style there is a striking similarity of idea and expression in the two parts; that Christ and the apostles, who frequently quote the prophets, never once suggested the idea of two Isaiahs; that no other satisfactory explanation of the admitted relationship of the two Isaiahs can be given than that of identity." (P. 145f.)

### The Golden Text

*"Come now, and let its reason together, saith Jehovah." The Great Texts of the Bible* notes that "notwithstanding the explicit teaching of the New Testament, the impression has got abroad that faith and reason are opposed to each other, that both cannot flourish in the same man at the same time; that if a man wants to be a man of faith, he must not think deeply, and that if he gives free rein to his reason it is likely to go hard with his faith. In many circles it is taken for granted that if a man becomes a Christian, he must allow his mind to be shackled, and that if he wishes to think freely and to follow the truth whithersoever it may lead him, he had better not attach himself to the church."

But people who "reason" as has just been suggested completely overlook the fact that the invitation to reason comes from God himself, and is not therefore the result of man's own desires. Anyone who reads the New Testament aright knows that the religion of Christ, that is, Christianity, claims the whole of its adherents for God. This is made certain by the Lord himself, when he said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." (Luke 10: 27.) The mind is the seat of the reason, and when the four "alls" of the passage just quoted are brought

into subjection to God, the result is a completely balanced person. There are too many people who use the term "reason" in a very loose manner. For example, when they say that some great Bible teaching is contrary to reason, they mean little more than that it is contrary to their opinion.

The term "reason," as used in the text now before us, carries with it the idea of the need of justification, either to oneself or to another, or some practice or attitude; and when the full context is read, it is easy to see the intended application. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it." (Isa. 1: 18-20.) In other words, if by bringing themselves to see themselves as God saw them, and by doing that which was necessary "to turn about face," they were assured of Jehovah's unconditional forgiveness; but if they chose to continue their rebellious course, inevitable destruction awaited them. When people "reason" with Jehovah, that is, in conjunction with him, they will always see the wisdom of doing as he commands.

### The Text Explained

#### The Prophetic Superscription

(Isa. 1: 1)

*The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.* It is easy to see from this superscription that the prophetic ministry of Isaiah continued over a

long period of time. However, this does not necessarily mean that he was actively engaged in his work during all of that period. It appears from Isa. 6: 1ff. that the prophet probably began his work near the close of the long reign of Uzziah (fifty-two years, including the regencies at the beginning and end of his reign), that is, 740 B.C., and continued at

least through the major part of the reign of Hezekiah. Both Jotham and Ahaz ruled a total of thirty-two years, or sixteen years each (2 Kings 15: 32, 33; 16: 1, 2); and we know that Isaiah was active during the period when Sennacherib, king of Assyria, made a vain attempt to overthrow Jerusalem. The record in both Second Kings and Isaiah (2 Kings 18; 13; Isa. 36: 1) states that the invasion into Judah by Sennacherib took place in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, but some Bible students think that the numerals are corrupt in the present Hebrew text. (See Jamieson, *in loco*; and the *Bible Dictionary* in the American Standard Version of the Bible.) It may be that this view does have some merit, since Sennacherib did not ascend the throne until 704 B.C., and the invasion apparently was in 701 B.C., which was only a very few years before the end of Hezekiah's reign—not less than two, nor more than four. Hezekiah's entire reign was for a period of twenty-nine years (2 Kings 18: 1, 2; read also 18: 13ff.)

If that which has just been said regarding the date of Sennacherib's ill-fated attempt to overthrow Jerusalem is correct, then the ministry of Isaiah lasted for a period of more than fifty years. The record of his public life is largely a history of the political movements of his day. It appears that he belonged to the upper class of society, and was an aristocrat in spirit. He sat close to the helm of state, and made direct efforts to influence both home and foreign policy, solely by the mighty word of prophecy. He moved like a prince among men, and spoke with the dignity and moral authority which befitted an ambassador of the Most High. We have no direct information regarding the last years of Isaiah's life, but some have thought that he was "sawn asunder" (cf. Heb. 11: 37) during the reign of Hezekiah's son Manasseh. (Cf. 2 Kings 21: 16.)

#### The Perverseness of God's People and Their Deplorable Condition (Isa. 1: 2-9)

*Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for Jehovah hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and*

*the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.*

Although the wrath of Jehovah will be expressed time and again throughout the prophecy of Isaiah, it is worthy of notice that the very first picture which we have of God in the book we are now studying is that of a loving heavenly Father, who is deeply grieved because of the sins of his people. However, it is Jehovah as the Father of a nation, rather than that of the individual; for it remained for Jesus to reveal the Fatherhood of God, respecting the individual, which he did and confirmed it by the cross. One of the sad features of the Bible is that of the wounded love of God, the picture and description of which may be seen on practically every page of his revelation to man. The indifference which men manifest toward God is beyond our ability to understand. Even the dumb animals have more consideration for their masters, than God's people do for him; and Isaiah, in the passage now before us, is in effect calling upon heaven and earth to witness this great tragedy. One has only to read the Bible in order to see that such an attitude has characterized the human race, since the day of the great transgression in Eden. (Cf. Jer. 8: 7.)

*Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that deal corruptly! they have forsaken Jehovah, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are estranged and gone backward. Why will ye still be stricken, that ye revolt more and more? the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and fresh stripes: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with oil.*

This is a terrible picture of sin as it manifests itself in people; and while we should not overlook its total effects in the lives of those who should have been free from its clutches, it appears quite probable that the reference in the passage just quoted was not so much to the sins of the people as such, but rather to the universality of their punishment. Their sins, of course, brought on the punishment, and it was necessary to

name them in order to signify the punishment which was theirs because of them. As the prophet viewed the matter, he was moved to ask, why they were willing to endure the torture of the enemy because of their sins, when their bodies were already torn and bleeding from head to foot. These punishments would continue as long as they sinned, and so, as the marginal reading of verse 5 has it, "why should ye be stricken any more," that is, why would they make it necessary that such punishment be continued, because of their sins? Some Bible students think that the word "where" should be substituted for "why," and if that were done, the question would be, "where," that is, "upon what part of your body is there room for wounds, bruises, and fresh stripes?"

The devastations of the invading enemies were almost as terrible then as they are now, and especially if the armies were those of the Assyrians. In speaking of this mighty scourge of nations, J. H. Morrison says, "The Assyrian army was a horde of disciplined savages whose chief delights were to plunder, ravish, and torture. "With his own hands their king would gouge out the eyes of noble captives, then perhaps flay them alive and peg them to the ground to perish. When on the warpath, as his palace sculptures show, he would dine with the bleeding heads of his enemies hung up in front of him to whet his appetite. He spread the terror of his name over Asia. In Isaiah's phrase, his boast was that he plundered the wealth of nations as one would harry a bird's nest, and none dared flutter a wing or chirp. He tore the people from home and country and mixed them together indiscriminately, so that all patriotism might be quenched." (*The Speaker's Bible—The Minor Prophets*, p. 130.)

*Your country is desolate; your cities are burned with fire; your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a booth in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except Jehovah of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, we should have been like unto Gomorrah.*

With the terrible conditions described by Isaiah before their own eyes, it is beyond our ability to understand how the people of Israel could continue to rebel against Jehovah; and if it were not for the fact that people today continue to suffer for sin while they continue to practice it, we would be speechless regarding the matter. Instead of Jerusalem being pictured as the capital city of a mighty nation, such as she would have been if God's people had remained faithful to him, she is here seen figuratively, as a lonely booth or lodge in which the caretaker of the vineyard or garden lived; and, literally, as a besieged city. And if it had not been for the mercy of Jehovah in sparing a small remnant of his people, the destruction of Israel would have been complete. This lesson is just as applicable to us today, as it was to Israel in the days of Isaiah. If it were not for God's grace, we would have no hope for the future. (Cf. Rom. 9: 29; 2 Pet. 3: 15f.)

#### Formalism Condemned and Penitent Obedience Commanded (Isa. 1: 13-17)

*Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; new moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies,—I cannot away with iniquity and the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary of bearing them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood.*

Read also verses 10-12. The moral condition of the people of Jerusalem and Judah had sunk so low that the leaders and people were referred to as "rulers of Sodom" and "people of Gomorrah." God plainly told them that he would not accept service from them as long as that state of affairs continued. (Cf. Amos 5: 21-24.) Jehovah will not accept acts of religious devotion which are unaccompanied by a life of heartfelt obedience. Worship in the assemble of the church is no place to atone for everyday disobedience; in spite of the fact that many professed Christians of our day seem to think that such is the case. Positive precepts are only

a means to an end, namely, moral obedience. Christ told his disciples that unless their righteousness exceeded that of the scribes and Pharisees, they would not be permitted to enter the kingdom of heaven. (See Matt. 5: 20; cf. James 4; 1-10.) There is absolutely nothing which can take the place of moral obedience in God's sight. Micah, Isaiah's contemporary, spoke along the same line when he uttered these words: "Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old? will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God." (Mic. 6: 6-8.)

The oblations and other religious ceremonies which the people of Jerusalem and Judah were offering and were performing were vain, because

they were done after the manner of men. (Cf. Matt. 15: 9.) They were not from the heart, and they were not looked upon as the duty which God had prescribed. Men may go through the form of praying under such circumstances, but God will not hear them. The psalmist said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear" (Psalm 66: 18); and the wise man tells us that "he that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination" (Prov. 28. 9).

*Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well: seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.*

This is a call to repentance. Any one who would have his service accepted by the Lord, must first return to him from his sinful ways. But this can be done only as he seeks to do right toward his fellow men. There is no such thing as being pleasing to God, while mistreating or failing to treat aright one's fellow man. (Read 1 John 3: 13-18; 4: 20, 21.)

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of the lessons for this quarter?  
Discuss the aim which we are to have before us during this time.  
What is the subject of the lesson for today?  
Repeat the golden text.  
Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

What is it that the world knows so little about many of its great people?  
When do people usually become interested in them?  
Why aren't great people generally appreciated while they are yet living?  
What is known of Isaiah's early life?  
Give a resume of his activities during his prophetic career.  
How does he compare with other prophets of the Old Testament? Give reasons for your answer.  
Give reasons for thinking that the same writer wrote the entire book of Isaiah.

### The Golden Text

What relation, if any, do faith and reason have in the Christian system?  
Why do some people think that reason has no place in Christianity?  
Why was the exhortation of the golden text given?

### The Prophetic Superscription

Approximately how long did the ministry of Isaiah continue? Give reasons for your answer.  
What can you say of the influence which he exercised during his active life?

What is known of his later years and death?

### The Perverseness of God's People and Their Deplorable Condition

What is the first picture of God which is presented in the Book of Isaiah?  
What is meant by the wounded love of God?  
Why is mankind so inconsiderate of him?  
Under what figure did Isaiah present this human attitude?  
What has been the record of man regarding this since the beginning?  
What appears to have been the prophet's purpose in picturing the sins of God's people?  
Why do people continue to suffer because of their sins?  
What is known of the inhuman methods of the Assyrian hordes in dealing with others?

In what way did the prophet liken the country of Judah and Jerusalem?  
What lesson should we learn from all this?  
What alone gives us hope for the future?

### Formalism Condemned and Penitent Obedience Commanded

In what way did Isaiah refer to the rulers and people of Jerusalem?  
Why did Jehovah tell them that he would not accept their sacrifice and service?  
What condition is always necessary in order to have religious devotion accepted?  
Why is the assembly of the church no place for the atonement of everyday disobedience? Give reasons for your answer.

Why do so many professed Christians act as if they thought such atonement is possible there?  
 What is the end of positive precepts?  
 What did Jesus say to his disciples regarding this attitude?  
 In what way did Micah emphasize this lesson?  
 Why did God call the oblations of his people vain?

What is necessary before prayer will be answered?  
 What were the people of Isaiah's day called upon to do?  
 How alone can people make themselves right with God?  
 Why can't people serve God acceptably without manifesting the proper attitude toward their fellow men?

## Lesson II—January 12, 1964

### ISAIAH'S CALL

#### Lesson Text

##### Isa. 6: 1-13

1 In the year that king Uz-zi'-ah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple.

2 Above him stood the ser'-a-phim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is Je-ho'-vah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

4 And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Je-ho'-vah of hosts.

6 Then flew one of the ser'-a-phim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

7 And he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched

thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin forgiven.

8 And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I: send me.

9 And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not: and see ye indeed, but perceive not.

10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again, and be healed.

11 Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until cities be waste without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the land become utterly waste,

12 And Je-ho'-vah have removed men far away, and the forsaken places be many in the midst of the land.

13 And if there be yet a tenth in it, it also shall in turn be eaten up: as a terebinth, and as an oak, whose stock remaineth, when they are felled; so the holy seed is the stock thereof.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Woe *unto them that call evil good, and good evil*” (Isa. 5: 20.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Isa. 5: 13-24.

#### Daily Bible Readings

January 6. M.....	The Twelve Called (Luke 6: 12-19)
January 7. T.....	Paul's Call (Acts 22: 3-22)
January 8. W.....	A Little Child Called (Matt. 18: 1-6)
January 9. T.....	Many Called, Few Chosen (Matt. 20: 1-14)
January 10. F.....	Called to Be Christ's (Rom. 1: 1-6)
January 11. S.....	A Call None Answered (Isa. 66: 1-4)
January 12. S.....	An Answer for All Who Call (Jer. 33: 1-3)

TIME.—Probably about 740 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, Isaiah, and the heavenly beings.

## Introduction

The literal meaning of the term "prophet" is one who speaks for another. A prophet might be the spokesman for another man, as, for example, Aaron. "And Jehovah said unto Moses, See, I have made thee as God to Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet." (Ex. 7: 1; cf. 4: 10-16.) Throughout the Old Testament, we read of the true prophets of God, and of some who proved to be untrue to him (cf. 2 Pet. 2: 16). There were also false prophets of idols, such as Baal; but there were also prophets of Jehovah who were true to him under all circumstances. We are to study the call of such a prophet in our lesson for today.

Not only was Isaiah one of the "major" prophets of the Mosaic age, his call to the prophetic ministry is one of the clearest, most impressive, and best known of any such call recorded in the Scriptures. It is quite probable that Isaiah had been deeply impressed by the powerful preaching of Amos and Hosea during his earlier years, and from them he had come to see something of the real significance of the social and religious conditions of his own Judean environment, which were so much like those of the Northern Kingdom. Julius A. Bewer pictures the situation which must have confronted Isaiah in these words: "The oppression of the poor and the miscarriage of justice; the selfish indulgence of the rich and the craving after wealth and power; the materialistic view of life

and its indifference to God; superstition and idolatrous practices and soulless worship. He had become aware of the reality and righteousness of God who demanded from men not sacrifices and ceremonial worship but above everything else right behaviour toward Himself and one's fellows. He was sure that the Day of the Lord would be a fearful judgment for his people." (*The Prophets*, p. 9. Harper & Brothers, publishers, New York.)

But whatever may have been the preparation which Isaiah received before his call to the prophetic ministry, we know that he was the man whom God wanted for that service at that time; and whatever his needs were at the time of his call, they, too, were fully supplied. In fact, any person who is willing to be used by God will be called into his service, and will be given whatever he needs for effective service in the kingdom of Christ. "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

(Rom. 8: 28.) God has both a place and a purpose for every responsible person in the world, and every one who is willing to follow God's plan will be called into his service. Such people are called through the gospel (2 Thess. 2: 13, 14), and that gospel fully informs them regarding, and furnishes them unto, every good work. (See 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17; 2 Pet. 1: 3; cf. Tit. 3: 1.)

## The Golden Text

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil." This woe is taken from a paragraph in which the prophet deals with the moral decline of the people of the Lord. The full statement is as follows: "Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of falsehood, and sin as it were with a cart rope: that say, Let him make speed, and let him hasten his work, that we may see it; and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it! Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and

prudent in their own sight! Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink; that justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!" (Isa. 5: 18-23.)

The figure of drawing iniquity with cords of falsehood, and sin as it were with a cart rope, apparently had reference to the practice of beginning with seemingly "small" sins, which may be compared to single cords or strands, and continuing until they became a rope which was strong enough to pull a cart. The Jewish rabbins were accustomed to saying, "An evil inclination is at first like a fine hair-string, but the finishing like

a thick *cart-ropes*" In other words, Continuous progress in iniquity will certainly result in an enormous accumulation of sin; and that was what had happened in the case of the people about whom Isaiah spoke. Their sin, in fact, had become so great that they virtually called upon God to demonstrate his displeasure with them, so that they could see it! That, of course, was diabolical blasphemy. (See verse 19.) Paul discusses this kind of situation at length in the first chapter of Romans, beginning at verse 18.

And so, with that kind of background, Isaiah says, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil." Such people are so alienated from God that they no longer make moral distinctions. They are like the people about whom the writer of Prov-

erbs speaks, "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the righteous, both of them alike are an abomination to Jehovah." (Prov. 17: 15; cf. Amos 5: 7.) This is substantially what Paul means by saying that some people have their conscience branded or seared "as with a hot iron." (See 1 Tim. 4: 1, 2.) It is also that which Jesus means by that state of the soul which is so saturated with evil, as to be beyond redemption. (See Matt. 12: 31ff; cf. Heb. 6: 4-8.) "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.) This, of course, is possible for anyone who is unwilling for the truth of God to have free course in his heart and life. (See John 8: 37; Rom. 1: 18.)

## The Text Explained

### Isaiah's Vision and Call

(Isa. 6: 1-8)

The chapter which we are to study has been described as one of the most important sections of scripture in the history of revelation. It is indeed a picture of marvelous beauty and subtle suggestion; and if we are willing to apply ourselves as we should to the task now before us, we shall learn lessons which will be of benefit to us all the days of our lives. The great words of the chapter were spoken and heard in vision, but they are not visionary in any shallow sense. On the contrary, they are intensely practical. There are too many people today who think of the prophets of the Bible as visionaries and dreamers of dreams, and therefore as impractical men. But those men had seen the visions of God and had heard his instruction to them, and they were therefore speaking his message to the people to whom they spoke. If we should analyse the first of our lesson text for today, it would run something like this:

(1) A vision of the Lord, verses 1-4. *In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said,*

*Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.*

It is quite possible, in view of that which is said in the first five chapters of Isaiah, that his prophetic ministry began before the formal call which we are considering today. This would certainly be true, if the first six chapters of the book we are now considering are chronologically arranged, or even if chapter six logically follows the first five chapters, regardless of whether or not they are chronologically arranged. The fact that Isaiah prophesied "in the days of Uzziah, . . ." naturally suggests that the prophet and the king were to some extent contemporaries. At any rate, if Isaiah did not prophesy before his formal call of the chapter now before us, then we must trust textual critics to tell us in what place in the written record the first five chapters of his prophecy belong.

It is not necessary for us to understand just who the seraphim were, other than that they were celestial beings, an order of angels who, along with cherubim, served around the throne of God. The vision which Isaiah saw of God reminds us of a similar vision which was vouchsafed to John while he was on "the isle that is called Patmos." (See Rev. 1: 9; and chapters 4 and 5.) The fact that Isaiah saw the Lord in his majestic

glory is the central point in the lesson now under consideration; and that experience accounts for his strong and consistent career as a prophet. It is only when a man truly sees the Lord, whether in visions like those in Bible times, or by faith which is possible for any of us, can he be counted on to render faithful service to him. Isaiah saw the Lord in all his glory upon his throne, and there was nothing upon the earth which could turn him aside from his duty as his spokesman. This was true of the apostle Paul, and it will be true of any of us who have a clear vision (by faith) of the Lord.

This truth is emphasized by George Adam Smith, in *The Book of the Twelve Prophets*, when he says that to see the truth and tell it, to be accurate and brave about the moral facts of our day—to this extent the Vision and the Voice are possible for every one of us. We will not, of course, be able to behold the visions which the Bible prophets saw, yet we must remember that to see facts as they are, and to tell the truth about them—this also is to be a faithful messenger of the Lord. We may inhabit a sphere which may not inspire the imagination, but even so, there are still facts to be observed and truth to be proclaimed. Every ordinary day brings forth her duties which may be as clearly seen as the stars of the night; and that involves the responsibility of men. The deeds and fortunes of people are everywhere before us, and the word of God is applicable to them; and if we will only be faithful to the message which God has revealed, then we too shall see God (by faith), and shall help to lead men in the way which the Lord wants them to go. (Cf. Matt. 28: 19, 20.)

The Lord whom Isaiah saw was the God of indescribable glory, and it is a fact worthy of notice that he made no effort to describe his Person. Like Paul in the New Testament, he saw and heard that which was not lawful for him to utter. (See 2 Corinthians 12: 1-10.) The prophet did say a few mysterious, but suggestive, words about the seraphim. The practical purpose of the narrative, so far as we are concerned, is not to set us to thinking about those things which are not possible for us to understand, but rather to enable us to

see the effect which they had on the prophet himself. There is no indication that even Isaiah looked upon the face of the Lord; he only saw the majestic sweep of his glorious garments and the attendants who waited upon him.

(2) The manner in which Isaiah looked upon himself, verses 5-7. *Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts.*

*Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin forgiven.*

No man is really prepared for service in the kingdom of Christ, until he has been made to see something of the great contrast between himself and the Lord; for until that is done, he will not have the proper attitude toward sacred things. It is always true that "the fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm 111: 10); and that means that one must be reverent before God before he is capable of knowing and doing his will. This is essentially the lesson which Jesus taught in the very beginning of his great sermon on the mount, when he said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5: 3; cf. Acts 10: 34, 35.) A man who is poor in spirit is one who realizes that he has no spiritual resources, and he is therefore willing to listen to the Lord, and to receive help from him on his own terms. This is also the essential meaning of reverence; for the reverent person is one who recognizes the sacredness or the inviolability of God, and who knows that without the help of God he is both helpless and without resources whatsoever. (Cf. John 5: 30; Acts 22: 10.)

(3) The prophet's vision of his duty, verse 8. *And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me.*

When a person (by faith) beholds Jehovah in all his majestic splendor and is overwhelmed in reverent awe, he will most certainly realize his



own undone condition; and when the voice of God speaks to him through the inspired revelation, he will not hesitate to place himself at the command of the Lord for whatever work he has for him to do. When people are made clean from their sins, they are expected to become dedicated servants of the Lord. (Cf. Tit. 2: 14; 1 Pet. 2: 9; Phil. 3: 12.)

### Jehovah's Commission to Him

(Isa. 6: 9, 10)

*And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again, and be healed.*

The marginal reading for "indeed," in the expressions "Hear ye indeed" and "see ye indeed" is *continually*, and the idea is to hear and see again and again, or with unceasing succession—indicating the beginning of a public reproach. "This people" suggests an expression of exasperation, since the people themselves, in reality, chose their own way of perversity. They were willfully obstinate, and preferred the wrong to the right way of the Lord. This passage is quoted several times in the New Testament, and is made to apply to different people at different times, but under similar circumstances. (See Matt. 13: 14, 15—Mark 4: 11, 12; Luke 8: 9, 10—John 12: 39-41; Acts 28: 25-27; cf. Rom. 11: 8.) This is sufficient to show that a prediction of the Old Testament may have its fulfillment in different people and on different occasions, depending, of course, upon the nature of the case and the disposition of the people.

It should be noted that wherever the passage now under consideration is used, whether in its original setting in the text now under consideration, or its quotation in the New Testament, the reference is always to those people who reject the message of the Lord; and that, in turn, was the result of their own attitude and disposition. When Jesus was delivering his great message in parables (Matt. 13), "the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? And he answered and said unto them, Unto you

it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath." (Matt. 13: 10-12.) The difference between the disciples and the multitudes was simply this: The disciples were in sympathy with the Lord's teaching, and improved their opportunities for learning the truth (verse 16); but the multitudes were not in sympathy with that which the Lord taught, and made no effort to improve their opportunities for learning the truth. That was the reason more opportunities were given to the disciples, while the multitudes had theirs taken away. (Verse 12; cf. John 7: 17; 2 Thess. 2: 8-12.)

### The Issue Clarified

(Isa. 6: 11-13)

*Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until cities be waste and without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the land become utterly waste, and Jehovah have removed, men far away, and the forsaken places be many in the midst of the land. And if there be yet a tenth in it, it also shall in turn be eaten up: as a terebinth, and as an oak, whose stock remaineth, when they are felled; so the holy seed is the stock thereof.*

Isaiah evidently realized something of the significance of the terrible pronouncement which the Lord made against his people in the preceding section of the lesson text; and he no doubt felt that if the implications in it continued indefinitely it would mean the end of the nation. It appears that it was for this reason that the prophet asked how long the sentence against the people would remain in effect. It should always be kept in mind that when the Lord pronounces judgment against his people, the reason for it is found in their own attitude and conduct. It is never the Lord's will to punish those who are doing their best to love and serve him. Jehovah instructed Ezekiel to say unto the children of Israel, "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?" (See Ezek. 33: 11.) The New Testament speaks after the same tenor: "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." (1 Tim. 2: 3, 4.) "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Pet. 3: 9.)

The reference to the destiny of Israel in the passage now under consideration appears to be to the repeated removals of the people from their homeland by foreign powers, such as Nebuchadnezzar, and others, even down to the Romans when Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus and his army, and even down to our day. There is no reason for thinking that the fleshly house of Israel are God's chosen people now, as was true in the days of the law of Moses; but because of their relation to Abraham they do enjoy a consideration by the Lord which has resulted in their protection from extermination by their

enemies. Even when there is nothing left but the "stump" of the tree, there is hope that it will grow again. (Cf. Job 14: 7.)

The sins of Solomon resulted in the division of the kingdom of Israel, but because of Solomon's close relationship to David, ail the kingdom was not removed from that royal house, nor did the division come in Solomon's day. (See 1 Kings 11: 9-13.) This appears to be the principle which Jehovah followed with reference to the Jews in their relationship to Abraham. (Read Gen. 12: 1-3.) This does not refer to their salvation, but rather to their continual survival here upon the earth. Jews stand in exactly the same relationship to the gospel that the Gentiles do; and any who are saved must obey that which the Lord has ordained for that purpose. (Cf. Gal. 3: 22; Rom. 10: 12; 1: 16, 17.) But it is interesting to observe that every major power which has persecuted the Jews, from the Assyrians on down to our day, has gone the way of all the earth; but the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob are still here!

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What is meant by the term "prophet" as used in the Bible?  
Were there prophets other than those of God? Give reasons for your answer.  
How only could a prophet demonstrate his faithfulness to God?  
In what "category" of the prophets does Isaiah belong?  
In what way was he related to some of the other prophets of his day?  
What was the moral condition of society when he began his work?  
Why was he called to the prophetic office?  
Are people called into God's service today? Give reasons for your answer.

### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of this text spoken?  
What figurative use did Isaiah make of the terms "cord" and "rope"?  
What did the prophet mean by saying that some called evil good, and good evil?  
Is it possible for the same situation to prevail today? Give reasons for your answer.

### Isaiah's Vision and Call

What can you say of the importance of the chapter which we are to study at this time?  
Why is it so important?  
Analyze the first eight verses of the chapter.  
When did Isaiah actually begin his prophetic work?

Discuss the vision which he had on the occasion now before us.

What lesson should we get from it?

Why is it essential that a man see the Lord, either in a vision, as in Bible times, or by faith today, before he begins his work in his service?

Show how we today can have a vision of God and hear his voice.

What is the responsibility of one who has seen God, either in a vision or by faith?

What effect did the vision have on Isaiah?

What always happens when a man sees the great contrast between himself and God?

Discuss this principle with reference to our own day.

What duty was imposed upon Isaiah and how did he view it?

What lesson is there in this for us?

### Jehovah's Commission to Him

What did Jehovah tell Isaiah to do?

In what way was he to impress his message on the people?

What use is made of his words in the New Testament?

Why were these words addressed to anyone?

What do we learn from this regarding opportunities for learning the truth which comes to us?

What is the necessary attitude of mind for learning God's will?

### The Issue Clarified

Why did Isaiah ask the Lord how long the conditions of the text were to continue?

What is Jehovah's attitude toward all men with reference to their moral condition? What did Isaiah learn regarding the destiny of Israel? How are the Jews related to the gospel, so far as salvation is concerned?

Upon apparently what principle have the Jews been preserved from total destruction since the time of Christ? What is noteworthy regarding those nations which have persecuted the Jews?

### Lesson III—January 19, 1964

## ISAIAH PREDICTS CHRIST'S GLORIOUS REIGN

### Lesson Text

Isa. 11: 1-10

1 And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jes'-se, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit.

2 And the Spirit of Je-ho'-vah shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Je-ho'-vah.

3 And his delight shall be in the fear of Je-ho'-vah; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither decide after the hearing of his ears;

4 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth; and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist, and faithfulness the girdle of his loins.

6 And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.

9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Je-ho'-vah, as the waters cover the sea.

10 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the root of Jes'-se, that standeth for an ensign of the peoples, unto him shall the nations seek; and his resting-place shall be glorious.

Golden Text.—*"Sing unto Jehovah; for he hath done excellent things (Isa. 12: 5)."*

Devotional Reading.—Isa. 2: 1-4.

### Daily Bible Readings

January 13. M.....	A Ruler Predicted (Gen. 49: 8-10)
January 14.....	T. Throne to Be Established (2 Sam. 7:1-17)
January 15. W.....	Description of the King (Isa. 9: 1-7)
January 16. T.....	Daniel's Vision of the Kingdom (Dan. 2: 31-45)
January 17. F.....	Christ's Announcement (Matt. 16: 13-21)
January 18.....	S. Query Concerning Kingdom (Acts 1: 1-8)
January 19.....	S. Colossians in Kingdom (Col. 1: 13, 14)

Time.—About 713 B.C.

Place.—Jerusalem.

Persons.—Isaiah and the people of Israel.

### Introduction

Isaiah is commonly referred to as "the Messianic prophet," because of his clear vision and prophetic description of the Messiah whom all devout Israelites were expecting. The very conditions which existed among God's people during Isaiah's day

made the glorious reign of "the coming One" seem all the more desirable by comparison. This was particularly true of those Jews who were spiritually minded, and whose aim was to please God. It is fair to assume that the unrighteous conditions

which confronted Isaiah stirred his conscience and made a powerful appeal to his patriotism; but there was another and greater influence which made him the prophet that he was, namely, the inspiration of the Spirit of God. This was pointed out in the lesson last week. Isaiah was impelled by the vision which he had of Jehovah to proclaim both his character and purpose regarding his people.

In speaking of the influences which made a prophet, Charles Foster Kent says, "The God whom he saw in his vision when he went up to pray at the temple, as the startling news came of the death of King Uzziah, was the divine King, majestic and holy, directing in justice and righteousness the destinies of men. At once this vivid glimpse of reality became the motive force in his life. Henceforth Isaiah's great mission was to influence his fellow men to be loyal to the demands of this altogether just and holy Ruler and thus to share in establishing his kingdom on earth. Wherever Isaiah found injustice or anything that was incompatible with his lofty conception of the divinely perfect state, he tactfully but uncompromisingly assailed it." His aim, as he was directed by the Spirit of God, was to prepare the people for the just and righteous reign of Christ.

But not only did Isaiah pass

through a remarkable individual experience, as we have already observed in this series of studies; he also had an Individual for his ideal. To him the future was not only to see a righteous order of society, but, over and above it, a glorious King. This glorious reign is further described in these words: "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in justice. And a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as streams of water in a dry place, as the shade of a great rock in a weary land. And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. And the heart of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly. The fool shall be no more called noble, nor the churl said to be bountiful. For the fool will speak folly, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise profaneness, and to utter error against Jehovah, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and to cause the drink of the thirsty to fail. And the instruments of the churl are evil: he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the meek with lying words, even when the needy speak - eth right. But the noble deviseth noble things; and in noble things shall he continue." (Isa. 32: 1-8.) This would be a great contrast to the wicked conditions of Isaiah's day.

### The Golden Text

*"Sing unto Jehovah; for he hath done excellent things."* Our golden text for today is taken from "a song of thanksgiving" which follows the description of the Messianic reign in Chapter 11, the chapter from which our lesson text is taken. If one will read the two chapters together, he will see the significance of the song of thanksgiving; for that is the natural expression of a grateful heart who realizes the great blessings which Jehovah bestows upon it. The full context of the golden text is found in the following words:

"And in that day thou shalt say, I will give thanks unto thee, O Jehovah; for though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid: for Jehovah, even Jehovah, is my strength and song;

and he is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. And in that day shall ye say, Give thanks unto Jehovah, call upon his name, declare his doings among the peoples, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto Jehovah; for he hath done excellent things: let this be known in all the earth. Cry aloud and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion; for great in the midst of thee is the Holy One of Israel." (Isa. 12: 1-6.)

One of the reasons why people do not sing God's praises more is that they do not fully realize the meaning of their salvation. Read the story of the plight of the children of Israel just before God opened up for them a way through the Red Sea, and the song which they and Moses sang following their deliverance from and

the destruction of their enemies, the Egyptians. (Ex., chapters 14, 15.) That same attitude was manifested by the eunuch when God saved him (Acts 8: 39); and it will be the way anyone *feels* who is aware of what it means to be saved from sin. We learn from James 5: 13 that singing is the natural manner for one who is cheerful to express himself; and this

is especially true of those whose dependence is upon the Lord. Those who feel their own sufficiency are not often given to thanksgiving; and, as someone has said, pride always silences the praise of God. Singing Christians are spiritually alive, for the praise of God implies that the singers realize that they have been saved by his matchless power.

## The Text Explained

### The Character of Israel's Deliverer

(Isa. 11: 1-5)

***And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit.*** The preceding chapter of Isaiah pictures the destruction of Israel by the Assyrians. The chapter begins with this condemnation of the unrighteous leaders: "Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and to the writers that write perverseness; to turn aside the needy from justice, and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be their spoil, and that they may make the fatherless their prey! And what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory? They shall only bow down under the prisoners, and shall fall under the slain. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still." (Isa. 10: 1-4.)

When people live without God, they must also expect to suffer without his help. It is relatively easy for the strong and influential to take advantage of the weak and poor; but if they will only take the time to consider such lessons as the one now before us, they will be able to see that a "day of visitation" is coming. The destruction of Israel, which is presented under the figure of the destruction of a great forest, should serve as an impressive example. "Therefore will the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory there shall be kindled a burning like the burning of fire. And the light of Israel will be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame; and it will burn and devour his thorns and his briars in one day. And he will consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both

soul and body: and it shall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth. And the remnant of the trees of his forest shall be few, so that a child may write them." (Isa. 10: 16-19.)

This terrible destruction of Israel was in punishment for their sins, and it was directed by Jehovah himself. National Assyria was God's agent, but that ruthless and mighty ruler did not realize it. "Ho Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, the staff in whose hand is mine indignation! I will send him against a profane nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few." (Isa. 10: 5-7.) This is another illustration of the manner in which God rules in the kingdoms of men (cf. Dan. 4: 17), and makes the wrath of man to praise and serve him (Psalm 76: 10; Ex. 9: 13-16).

But God did not intend for the punishment which was inflicted by the Assyrians to be permanent and complete, and therein lies the significance of this section of our lesson text for today. Instead of the stock of the tree of Jesse continuing to decay until it returned to the dust of the earth, a tender branch came out of it; and in due time it bore fruit. That, of course, is a reference to the coming of Christ from the family of David. Paul refers to this very thing in Rom. 15: 12: "And again Isaiah saith, There shall be the root of Jesse, and he that ariseth to rule over the Gentiles." (Cf. Isa. 11: 10.) Thus, not only do we learn from Paul whom the branch or twig foreshadowed, but we are also told that the rule of the Coming One would be extended to include the Gentiles. (Cf. Isa. 9: 1-7.)

***And the Spirit of Jehovah shall***

*rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of Jehovah.* This is a statement of the work of the Holy Spirit with reference to the ministry of Christ; and there are seven items of gifts specified, namely, (1) *rest upon him*, that is, be with him permanently; (2) wisdom; (3) understanding; (4) counsel; (5) might; (6) knowledge; and (7) the fear of Jehovah. All of this means that the Messiah would be completely fitted for the work which was ordained for him to do. (Cf. Acts 10: 38.)

In looking at this prophetic picture of the Messiah, we see him as the very ideal of a strong and righteous ruler of men, which would be in contrast with the unrighteous rulers of Israel. This ideal was completely fulfilled in Jesus, who was and is the promised Messiah, and in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (See Col. 2: 3.) This, of course, implies that he would never experience any difficulty in his administration, or be brought under the shadow of any perplexity. This portrait of the Messiah also presents a picture of the graces which are in store for all the needs of the people who are willing to accept his offer of salvation and Christian guidance. (Cf. 1 Cor. 4: 7; James 1: 5-8; 2 Pet. 1: 3.) The New Testament sets forth the truth that the special work of the Holy Spirit during the reign of Christ is to bring to fulfillment in human experience the total meaning of Jesus Christ as God's Son and the Redeemer of the world.

*And his delight shall be in the fear of Jehovah; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither decide after the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth; and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist, and faithfulness the girdle of his loins.*

The "fear of Jehovah" means the proper respect and reverence for Jehovah. "I can of myself do nothing; as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is righteous; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that

sent me." (John 5: 30.) The verses now before us describe the spirit and character of the rule of Christ; and he himself tells us that all authority and judgment have been given into his hands. (Cf. Matt. 28: 18; John 5: 22, 27.) The reign of Christ is always according to the principles of justice and righteousness; and its wholesome effect in the lives of his people will be emphasized in the next section of our lesson text for today. It should be obvious to any thoughtful person that a righteous and just kingdom cannot exist, where the subjects are unrighteous and unjust. (Read Col. 3: 5-17.)

### The Mighty Reconciliation (Isa. 11: 6-9)

*And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fawn together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea.*

This passage of scripture should be familiar to all people who want to please the Lord; for it is truly one of the great statements regarding the reign of Christ. Bible students are not in agreement as to the sense in which we are to understand the animals in question—that is, whether they are to be taken literally, as a return to Eden before sin entered into that holy habitation; or whether they are to be compared to men of fierce and furious dispositions, who bite and devour according to their sinful desires before having their tempers altered by the power of the gospel of Christ. The context seems to indicate the latter viewpoint, and that is the position taken in this study.

If the idea just suggested is correct, then the state of peace and well-being in the kingdom of Christ is symbolized by the idyllic picture of wild beasts and dangerous reptiles in harmonious companionship with domesticated animals and children.

Or, to state the same thing in another way, those "animals" and "serpents" and people who were natural enemies in the unregenerate state shall, when brought under the influence of the King of Glory, be friends together. This is in complete harmony with the oft-repeated injunction of the Scriptures, "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (cf. Rom. 13: 9), and to which Paul adds, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: love therefore is the fulfillment of the law" (verse 10). If this principle is diligently followed by the Lord's people, there will be peace and harmony among them; but, in the language of Paul again, "if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." (See Gal. 5: 13-15.) In this last passage, Paul is in effect saying, "If the professed followers of Christ can't motivate their lives by love, but instead are filled with the spirit of untamed beasts and venomous serpents, then they should be careful not to destroy each other completely!"

Paul's language in Galatians, just referred to, appears to be an example of the apostle's frequent use of ironical language, in an effort to get the brethren to see themselves in their true light. The question plainly stated in this: "If the spirit of mutual love does not prevent Christian brethren from preying on one another, they are in danger of utter destruction." (The Expositor's Greek Testament, *in loco*.) But, as The Interpreter's Bible points out, Paul refused to grant license to such people, and threw the suit of quarreling brethren out of court. The Spirit of Christ proposes "to do nothing less than change human nature and repeal the law of tooth and claw." (Cf. 2 Pet. 1: 5-11.) This is indeed a picture of the "redeemed nature" of those people who are true citizens of the kingdom of Christ; and they have been so truly converted that "a little child shall lead them!" (Cf. Mark. 10: 15.)

If that which has just been said is correct, then we have before us one of the great motives for evangelizing the world and building up the church of the Lord. One does not have to look very far, or very long, in this sinful world before he is fully aware that Burns was right when he said, "Man's inhumanity to man makes

countless thousands mourn." But when the gospel of Christ has been brought to bear upon those in sin, whether in the church or out of it, it will not be long until they will live in peace with the humblest saint here upon the earth. There is no greater example of this principle in actual operation than that of the one-time notorious Saul of Tarsus. (Cf. Acts 26: 9-11; 1 Thess. 2: 7f.) It is, of course, only through the "knowledge of Jehovah" that such a happy situation can be brought about; and that requires the proclamation of the word of God throughout the world continuously. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain [kingdom or church]; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea."

#### A Glorious Word of Assurance

(Isa. 11: 10)

*And it shall come to pass in that day, that the root of Jesse, that standeth for an ensign of the peoples, unto him shall the nations seek; and his resting-place shall be glorious.*

The coming Messiah was represented in the picture now before us, not as a stately and luxuriant tree, but as coming from the apparently dead roots of a tree which had been cut down. (Cf. Isa. 53: 2; Rev. 5: 5; 22: 6.) This promised Redeemer is portrayed by Isaiah as "an ensign of the peoples," that is, a standard toward which they might look and around which they might gather. This was literally fulfilled when Christ was raised upon the cross. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself. But this he said, signifying by what manner of death he should die." (John 12: 32, 33.) The "resting-place," in its practical application to us, is the church. (Cf. Isa. 60: 13; Eph. 5: 25-27; and the resting-place of the ark of the covenant in the sanctuary of the temple during the age of Moses.)

The plural "peoples" means the Gentiles and corresponds to the "nations" in the same passage. The same idea is also expressed in Isa. 2: 2-4, along with the peaceful aspect of the kingdom of Christ. "And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of

the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. 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."

Micah has substantially the same statement regarding the kingdom of

Christ and its effect on the peoples of the earth, and he adds—this further information; "But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of Jehovah of hosts hath spoken it. For all the peoples walk every one in the name of his god; and we will walk in the name of Jehovah our God for ever and ever." (See Mic. 4: 1-5.) Both Isaiah and Micah were speaking of the same events; and they were showing that the kingdom of Christ would be in marked contrast with the desolate picture which the prophets drew of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. (Cf. Mic. 3: 12.)

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Why was Isaiah such an outstanding prophet?  
What is meant by his being the "Messianic prophet"?  
Why were the people so eagerly awaiting the coming of the Messiah?  
What is the meaning of the term "Messiah"?  
What was Isaiah's aim as a prophet?  
What was ever before him as his ideal?  
In what way did he picture the coming reign of Christ?

### The Golden Text

Give the setting of the golden text for today's lesson.  
Why is it proper and right for God's people to sing?  
Give some examples of people who expressed their feeling in song?  
Why do many people take little or no interest in singing praises to God?  
What is usually true of Christian people who spend much time in such singing?

### The Character of Israel's Deliverer

What help can we get from the preceding chapter of Isaiah in understanding this lesson?  
What always happens to people who try to live without God?  
What lesson should the "strong and overbearing" learn from our lesson for today?  
Why was the kingdom of Israel destroyed?  
What means did Jehovah use for that destruction?  
How did the king of Assyria feel about the matter?

What important lesson should we learn from God's use of and his attitude toward Assyria?  
In what way was Jesus equipped for his Messianic ministry?  
What great contrast do we see from his work?  
What is meant by the "fear of Jehovah"?  
According to what principles does Christ govern his kingdom?

### The Mighty Reconciliation

Why is this section of the lesson text such an important passage of scripture?  
What great lesson do we learn from it?  
Why is it possible from people of such widely differing natures, to dwell together in peace?  
What is meant by "redeemed nature"?  
In what sense shall "a little child lead them"?  
Why is this such a great motive for teaching God's will to others?  
Give an example of how the "mighty reconciliation" actually works in life.

### A Glorious Word of Assurance

In what way was the coming of the Messiah pictured in this section of the lesson text?  
What is meant by the "root of Jesse"?  
In what way is Jesus "an ensign of the peoples"?  
How was this prediction literally fulfilled?  
What did Isaiah mean by "his resting-place"?  
What is signified by the term "peoples"?  
In what way did Isaiah further picture the coming reign of Christ and its great influence?  
Why is the reign of Christ referred to as glorious?



## Lesson IV—January 26, 1964

## ISAIAH'S SONG OF PRAISE

## Lesson Text

Isa. 25: 1-12

1 O Je-ho'-vah, thou art my God;  
I will exalt thee, I will praise thy  
name; for thou hast done wonderful  
things, *even* counsels of old, in faith-  
fulness *and* truth.

2 For thou hast made of a city a  
heap, of a fortified city a ruin, a  
palace of strangers to be no city; it  
shall never be built.

3 Therefore shall a strong people  
glorify thee; a city of terrible na-  
tions shall fear thee.

4 For thou hast been a stronghold  
to the poor, a stronghold to the needy  
in his distress, a refuge from the  
storm, a shade from the heat, when  
the blast of the terrible ones is as a  
storm against the wall.

5 As the heat in a dry place wilt  
thou bring down the noise of stran-  
gers; as the heat by the shade of a  
cloud, the song of the terrible ones  
shall be brought low.

6 And in this mountain will Je-  
ho'-vah of hosts make unto all peo-  
ples of feast of fat things, a feast of  
wines on the lees, of fat things full of  
marrow, of wines on the lees well re-  
fined.

7 And he will destroy in this

mountain the face of the covering  
that covereth all peoples, and the  
veil that is spread over all nations.

8 He hath swallowed up death for  
ever; and the Lord Je-ho'-vah will  
wipe away tears from off all faces;  
and the reproach of his people will  
he take away from off all the earth:  
for Je-ho'-vah hath spoken it.

9 And it shall be said in that day,  
Lo, this is our God; we have waited  
for him, and he will save us: this is  
Je-ho'-vah; we have waited for him,  
we will be glad and rejoice in his  
salvation.

10 For in this mountain will the  
hand of Je-ho'-vah rest; and Mó-ab  
shall be trodden down in his place,  
even as straw is trodden down in the  
water of the dunghill.

11 And he shall spread forth his  
hands in the midst thereof, as he that  
swimmeth spreadeth forth *his hands*  
to swim; but *Je-ho'-vah* will lay low  
his pride together with the craft of  
his hands.

12 And the high fortress of thy  
walls hath he brought down, laid low,  
and brought to the ground, even to  
the dust.

Golden Text.—*"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is  
steady on thee; because he trusteth in thee."* (Isa. 26: 3.)

Devotional Reading.—Isa. 26: 1-7.

## Daily Bible Readings

January 20. M.....	Praises Sung (Isa. 42: 1-10)
January 21. ....	T. God's Praise Shown (Isa. 60: 1-6)
January 22. W.....	Love of Men's Praise (John 12: 37-43)
January 23. T.....	Songs of Praise (Jer. 20: 7-13)
January 24. F.....	Sing Praise in the Church (Heb. 2: 9-12)
January 25. S.....	Praise from Mouth of Babies (Matt. 21: 12-17)
January 26. S.....	Praise to His Name (Psalm 68: 1-4)

Time.—712 B.C.

Place.—Jerusalem.

Persons.—Jehovah and Isaiah.

## Introduction

The man who said, "Give me the  
making of the nation's songs, and I  
care not who makes its laws," was  
speaking from a true insight into hu-  
man nature; for singing lies nearer  
the center of life than we think. God's  
people today have few greater heri-

tages, than the privilege of singing  
praises unto him. No great religious  
movement ever succeeds in the ab-  
sence of gospel singing. The great  
disposition to abound in the Divine  
exercise of singing praises, not only  
in appointed solemn meetings, but

when Christians occasionally meet together in each other's houses, as someone has observed, is a contribution to Christian growth and development, the value of which any thoughtful observer readily recognizes. In fact, private singing, as one has the opportunity, has a great tendency to enliven, animate, and rejoice the soul of a child of God, and aid him in his effort to propagate vital religion. The place and power of song in the life of a Christian may be learned from such scriptures as the following: 1 Cor. 14: 15; Eph. 5: 19; Col. 3: 16; and James 5: 13. Longfellow wrote,

God sent his Singers upon the earth  
With songs of sadness and of mirth,  
That they might touch the hearts of  
men,

And bring them back to heaven  
again.

—The Singers.

It appears that James, in his well-known statement, "Is any among you suffering? let him pray, Is any cheerful? let him sing praise," is exhorting each person to give expression to his feelings in an appropriate manner. If one is in mental or physical anguish, he is encouraged to pray; but if he is in a cheerful mood, then he is called upon to give expression to that attitude through singing. But this does not necessarily mean that only the cheerful in heart should sing. Elihu, whose anger was kindled against Job and his three friends, after the latter had failed to silence the great patriarch, made this observation regarding those in deep trouble, "By reason of the multitude of oppression they cry out; they cry for help by reason of the arm of the mighty. But none saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?" (Job 35: 9, 10.)

When people cry unto God in the

day of trouble, they not only recognize their own finite condition and dependence upon him, but they may also confidently expect God to give them, even in the midnight of sorrow, songs which are capable of changing the present gloom into the hope of the morning. The fact that man can and should sing praises in the deepest darkness does not explain suffering, but it does counteract its poison. However, it should be remembered that only God can give such songs to men. The natural man cannot overcome suffering, but the grace of God can blunt the thorn which pierces the flesh. (Cf. 2 Cor. 12: 7-10.) This is one of the proofs that man is above the beasts of the earth and the birds of the air (Job 35: 11); but it is extremely unfortunate that such religion is not widespread, and therein is found the reason why so many prayers remain unanswered. (See verse 12f.) If one will read the chapters in Isaiah which precede our lesson text for today, he will see that the song which we are considering today was sung against a background of death and destruction.

Christianity is pre-eminently a religion of song; but it is not enough simply to sing. God's people must be careful to sing the right kind of songs. The New Testament not only tells us of the place and power of song; it also instructs us regarding the nature of the songs which we are to sing, namely, psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. And, too, all error in our singing should be carefully avoided, that is, all error in the contents of the songs. There are many songs for many occasions, and all scriptural songs have their place; and those who are responsible for the selection of the songs should be careful to see that those which are selected are appropriate for the occasion.

### The Golden Text

*"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because' he trusteth in thee."* The religion of Christ in indeed a religion for everyday living, and there is nothing in which its practicability is so strikingly expressed, as in its promise of peace at the heart of that agitation which is so characteristic of the life of the world. It is the personal experience of every devoted

follower of the Lord, that when he places his trust completely in Christ he has a peace which the world can neither give nor take away. When Paul was in the Roman prison, he wrote these words to his beloved Philippian brethren: "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice. Let your forbearance be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. In nothing be anxious; but in

everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus." (Phil 4: 4-7.)

But it should be remembered that "peace" is not necessarily freedom from trouble; for it is a recorded fact that some of the most peaceful souls in all history have been bitterly persecuted and in deep trouble while enjoying the peace of God which is beyond our ability to fathom. This was true of Jesus, Paul, and many others who learned from their sufferings how to be obedient to God and to put their trust in him. (Read Heb. 5: 7-9; 2 Cor. 12: 7-10.) In writing to the Romans, Paul said, "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we also rejoice in our tribulations: knowing that tribulation worketh steadfastness; and steadfastness, approvedness; and approvedness, hope: and hope putteth not to shame; because the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us." (Rom. 5: 1-5.)

Just before Jesus left his disciples to return to the Father, he said to them, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. 28: 20b.) The marginal reading for "always" is *all the days* which, of course, includes bad days as well as *good* days; and if he is with his people "all the days," he will be with them during any and all conditions and circumstances. This is substantially what Paul means when he says, "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." (Rom. 8: 28.) Paul does not say that all things *are* good, but that all things *work together* for good, that is, the ultimate good. Something which occurs today may be the beginning of a series of circumstances which will not reach fruition for the next twenty-five years; but that period of time may prove how essential the almost unnoticed circumstances were for our later good. The ingredients of a prescription taken singly might cause one's death, while the combination may be the very thing he needs. Anyone who has faith in God—whose mind is stayed on him—and who has confidence in his promises, will enjoy the inward peace which only he can give, and which no one can take away. (Cf. Rom. 8: 31-39.)

## The Text Explained

Thanksgiving for God's Overthrow  
of the Enemy  
(Isa. 25: 1-5)

*O Jehovah, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things, even counsels of old, in faithfulness and truth. For thou hast made of a city a heap, of a fortified city a ruin, a palace of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built.*

The reference here could be to any one of a number of great cities and nations which were destroyed by Jehovah, but it is quite probable that Isaiah had Babylon in mind. He predicted the fall of that mighty nation in these words: "Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, who shall not regard silver, and as for gold, they shall not delight in it. And their bows shall dash the young men in pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye

shall not spare children. And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans' pride, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall shepherds make their flocks to lie down there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and ostriches shall dwell there, and wild goats shall dance there. And wolves shall cry in their castles, and jackals in the pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged." (Isa. 13: 17-22.)

It can easily be seen from the words of Isaiah that the destruction of the overpowering enemies would be complete; and that is the lesson which we shall learn from this portion of the lesson text. This is the

picture which John has left regarding spiritual Babylon, which is the plague of God's people today. (See Rev. 18: 1-24.) It makes no difference what form the opposition to the body of Christ takes, the time of reckoning is certain to come. God has declared, over and over again, that vengeance belongs to him, and that he will certainly repay. The "counsels of old," to which the prophet refers, have reference to that which Jehovah purposed to do, the plans of which were formulated in the past. It sometimes seems as if God has forgotten his promises to his people, but that is only as it appears to men. This is what Peter has reference to when he says, "But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." (2 Pet. 3: 8.) This is to say that time does not mean to God what it does to us; and if we are concerned about whether or not God will keep his promise to us, let us remember that he lives in an Eternal Present; and that he has never failed to keep a promise, when its fulfillment depended upon him. (Cf. 2 Cor. 1: 20.)

*Therefore shall a strong people glorify thee; a city of terrible nations shall fear thee. For thou hast been a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shade from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as in a storm against the wall. As the heat in a dry place wilt thou bring down the noise of strangers; as the heat by the shade of a cloud, the song of the terrible ones shall be brought low.*

Those who are familiar with the literary style of the "writing prophets" of the Old Testament are aware of the fact that the five verses of this section of our lesson for today were written in poetic form. The poetic form is not indicated in the version which is being used, but it is easy to recognize. The style is indicated in the Revised Standard Version, and in other major translations. Indeed, it has been said that fully one third of the entire Old Testament text is in poetic form. With the exception of the superscriptions, practically all of Psalms, Proverbs, Songs of Solomon, Lamentations, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum,

Habakkuk, and Zephaniah are written in poetry; and the greater parts of Job, Isaiah, Hosea, Joel, and Amos are poetic. Many of the other books of the Old Testament have poetic portions in otherwise prose material. The poetic aspect of the portion of our text now under consideration must be recognized, if we are to read it intelligently.

Hebrew poetry does not rhyme as does the English, but has measured cadences within the line. These cadences indicate emotion, and the particular type of feeling may be learned from their number—thus, two short, sharp beats for alarm; four for marching or dignity; and five for deep feeling of joy or sorrow. Another feature of Hebrew poetry is that of "parallelism," which means that there is a balancing of thought against thought, phrase against phrase, etc. This phase of the subject is very obvious in the text now before us.

Therefore shall a strong people glorify thee;

A city of terrible nations shall fear thee.

For thou hast been a stronghold to the poor,

A stronghold to the needy in his distress,

A refuge from the storm, a shade from the heat,

When the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.

As the heat in a dry place wilt thou bring down the noise of strangers;

As the heat by the shade of a cloud, the song of the terrible ones shall be brought low.

These verses describe that which God will do to the powerful and tyrannical (terrible) nations which oppress his people. It is often necessary for Jehovah to use such nations to punish his people for their sins; but that does not mean that those sinful nations which have been thus used will escape destruction themselves. (Read Habakkuk.) But any professed follower of Christ will find that the experience of suffering and sorrow is not in vain if afterward he can see something of God's purpose in it, and will face life with a new and deeper knowledge of his love and care.

## Jehovah's Feast of Victory

(Isa. 25: 6-8)

*And in this mountain will Jehovah of hosts make unto all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering that covereth all peoples, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He hath swallowed up death for ever; and the Lord Jehovah will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the reproach of his people will he take away from off all the earth: for Jehovah hath spoken it.*

While the words just quoted had a meaning for the people of Isaiah's day: they are more meaningful to us. The Jews in the time of the Old Testament did not have the real and abiding hope of immortality which we do; and when such words as those of the text were spoken, they evidently did not mean as much to them as they do to us. Israel of old, to a large extent, labored, sorrowed, suffered, and died without any expectation of an eternal reward; but when men like Isaiah spoke words of hope and cheer, such as these, "He hath swallowed up death for ever; and the Lord will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the reproach of his people will he take away from off all the earth," they must have been greatly encouraged, although they probably did not realize the full significance of that which was said; certainly not as we do.

"Wines on the lees" and "fat things full of marrow" had reference to the finest of food and drink; while the destruction of "the face of the covering that covereth all peoples, and the veil that is spread over all nations," probably indicates the removal of all that which prevented the clear understanding of that which the law and the prophets foreshadowed. Adam Clarke notes that "he will unveil all the Mosaic ritual, and show by his apostles that it referred to, and was accomplished in, the sacrificial offering of Jesus Christ." He then goes on to say that we learn from the three verses of this section of the lesson text these three truths, namely, (1) That the gospel is a Plenteous provision: "I will make a feast for all people." (2) That it is a source of light and salvation: "I

will destroy the veil. I will abolish death, and bring life and immortality to light." (3) That it is a source of comfort and happiness: "I will wipe away all tears from off all faces." (Cf. Rev. 21: 1-5.) Dr. Clarke then adds this observation: "As in the Arabic countries a covering was put over the face of him who was condemned to suffer death, it is probable that the words in verse 7 may refer to this. The whole world was condemned to death, and about to be led out to execution, when the gracious Lord interposed, and, by a glorious sacrifice, procured a general pardon."

## The Destruction of Moab Foretold

(Isa. 24: 9-12)

*And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is Jehovah; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. For in this mountain will the hand of Jehovah rest; and Moab shall be trodden down in his place, even as straw is trodden down in the water of the dunghill. And he shall spread forth his hands in the midst thereof, as he that swimmeth spreadeth his hands to swim; but Jehovah will lay low his pride together with the craft of his hand. And the high fortress of thy walls hath he brought down, laid low, and brought to the ground, even to the dust.*

While verse 9 may have had a special reference to Israel who had waited for Jehovah, during the time of their trouble and oppression; it is very probable that the ultimate aim was to present a prophecy regarding the coming of Christ. Or, to state the same thing in another way, the people would say regarding Christ, This is the One for whom we have been waiting, he will save us; and we will rejoice in his salvation. We do know that much of the prophecy of Isaiah related to the coming of Christ; and it is for that reason that he is called the Messianic prophet.

It is not clear as to why Moab was singled out for destruction in this particular place. That nation was one of the principal enemies of Israel, and it may have been that it was simply used as an illustration of the manner in which God would deal with those who opposed and mistreated his people. At any rate,

the destruction of Moab is pictured in a dramatic fashion—as straw is trodden in the dunghill, and thereby made into manure. Bible students are not agreed as to the remark about the swimmer: Does it refer to the action of Jehovah as he moved to destroy Moab? or does it picture the efforts of Moab as he strives to move in his own way? The context seems to indicate that the reference is to the latter. Verses 10-12 are rendered

in *The Complete Bible* in this way: "For the hand of the Lord will rest on this mountain, but Moab will be trampled down in the water of the dung-pit; as though he spread out his hands in the midst of it, as a swimmer spreads out his hands to swim, his pride will be laid low despite all the tricks of his hands. The high fortress of his walls will be brought down, laid low, leveled to the earth, even to the dust."

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

How important are songs in the life of any people? Give reasons for your answer.  
When and where should Christians sing?  
What kind of influence does private singing have on the individual?  
Discuss the New Testament teaching with reference to the place and power of singing.  
Discuss James' admonition regarding this subject.  
Is it possible for people in deep trouble to sing? Give reasons for your answer.  
What does all of this show regarding the place of man in the universe?  
How is all of this related to the song of Isaiah which we are to study today?  
What special attention should be given to our singing in public worship?

### The Golden Text

What place does the promise of peace have in the religion of Christ?  
How alone may Christians experience this peace?  
Illustrate this by the teaching of Paul.  
In what does the peace of Christ consist?  
How is it possible for Christians in deep trouble and sorrow to have peace?  
What great promise did Jesus leave with his people when he returned to the Father?  
Give an illustration of its practical working in the lives of his people.

### Thanksgiving for God's Overthrow of the Enemy

Discuss the complete destruction of the center of the opposition to God's people.  
What application does this lesson have for us and all of his people throughout the ages?

What assurance has God given regarding his promises?  
Why do people sometimes wonder about what he is doing and will do about his promises?  
What should always be the attitude of his people toward his promises?  
Discuss the place and power of poetry in much of the Old Testament scriptures.  
What are some of the significant features of Hebrew poetry?  
What effect does the proper reading of the text have on its understanding?  
What may God's people always expect regarding their enemies?

### Jehovah's Feast of Victory

What special lesson do the words of this portion of the lesson text have for us?  
How did the Israelites for the most part feel regarding the question of immortality?  
Why did Isaiah speak so clearly regarding such questions as the swallowing up of death?  
In what way did he describe the feast which Jehovah prepares for his people?  
What three great truths should we learn from this section of the lesson text?

### The Destruction of Moab Foretold

Why did Isaiah probably speak regarding the question of waiting for Jehovah?  
What should the attitude of the Lord's people be with reference to the salvation which is brought to them?  
What was the probable reason for singling out Moab for ultimate destruction?  
In what way was that destruction described?  
What is meant by the reference to straw which is trodden in the dunghill?  
Who spread forth his hands as if he were trying to swim? Give reasons for your answer.  
What lesson should we learn from all of this, especially as the application is made to our day?

## Lesson V—February 2, 1964

# ISAIAH CONDEMNS STRONG DRINK

## Lesson Text

Isa. 28: 1-13

1 Woe to the crown of pride of the drunkards of E'-phra-im, and to the fading flower of his glorious beauty,

which is on the head of the fat valley of them that are overcome with wine!

2 Behold, the Lord hath a mighty

and strong one; as a tempest of hail, a destroying storm, as a tempest of mighty waters overflowing, will he cast down to the earth with the hand.

3 The crown of pride of the drunkards of E'-phra-im shall be trodden under foot:

4 And the fading flower of his glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be as the first-ripe fig before the summer; which when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up.

5 In that day will Je-ho'-vah of hosts become a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people;

6 And a spirit of justice to him that sitteth in judgment, and strength to them that turn back the battle at the gate.

7 And even these reel with wine, and stagger with strong drink; the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they stagger with strong

drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.

8 For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, *so that there is no place clean.*

9 Whom will he teach knowledge? and whom will he make to understand the message? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts?

10 For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little.

11 Nay, but by *men of* strange lips and with another tongue will he speak to this people;

12 To whom he said, This is the rest, give ye rest to him that is weary; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.

13 Therefore shall the word of Je-ho'-vah be unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little; that they may go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

**Golden Text.**—*“Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler; and whosoever erreth thereby is not wise.”* (Prov. 20: 1.)

**Devotional Reading.**—Eccles. 2: 1-8.

Daily Bible Readings

January 27. M.....	Israel's Great Sin (Amos 2: 4-12)
January 28. T.....	Result of Intemperance (Isa. 28: 1-8)
January 29. W.....	Dangers of Intemperance (Lev. 10: 8-11)
January 30. T.....	Abstinence from Evil (1 Pet. 4: 1-11)
January 31. F.....	No Drunkards in Heaven (1 Cor. 6: 1-10)
February 1. S.....	Drunkards Come to Poverty (Prov. 23: 1-21)
February 2. S.....	Drunkenness Denounced (Luke 21: 34; Eph. 5: 18)

**Time.**—About 725 B.C.

**Place.**—Jerusalem.

**Persons.**—Isaiah, and the people of Ephraim and Judah.

Introduction

The purpose of this lesson is to call attention to the injury and sin which result from the use of alcohol as a beverage. No Christian can give too much attention to both the theory and practice of temperance or, which is the same thing, self-control, not only with reference to strong drinks, but in everything else as well. But since the lesson before us now deals primarily with the question of strong drink, it will not be out of place to call attention to some things which men of experience have said regarding the issue. According to the Japanese, “A man takes a drink, then

the drink takes a drink, and the next drink takes the man.” The Scythian sage Anacharsis puts the matter in this way, “The first draught serveth for health, the second for pleasure, the third for shame, and the fourth for madness.”

Benjamin Franklin, the statesman, points out that “some of the domestic evils of drunkenness are houses without windows, gardens without fences, fields without tillage, barns without roofs, children without clothing, principles, morals, or manners.” And, according to Bacon, “All the armies on earth do not destroy so much of

the human race, or alienate so much property, as drunkenness," while Jerrold avers that "habitual intoxication is the epitome of every crime." In the words of Horace Mann, "Let there be an entire abstinence from intoxicating drinks throughout this country during the period of a single generation, and a mob would be as impossible as combustion without oxygen."

Dr. Howard Kelly of Johns Hopkins University fame says that "there is no disease in the world for which alcohol is a cure. ... Its use is ruinous to the kidneys, liver, heart, and smaller blood vessels, and gives rise to that most common fatality, high

blood pressure." Sir Walter Raleigh said that "it were better for a man to be subject to any vice, than to drunkenness; for all other vanities and *sins* are recovered, but a drunkard will never shake off the delight of beastliness; for the longer it possesseth a man, the more he will delight in it, and the older he groweth the more he shall be subject to it; for it dulleth the spirits, and destroyeth the body as ivy doth the old tree; or as the worm that engendereth in the kernel of the nut." These quotations could be multiplied, but suffice it to say, in the words of Francis Quarles, "He that is a drunkard is qualified for all vices."

## The Golden Text

**"Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler; and whosoever erreth thereby is not wise."** This was the observation of a man who was speaking from experience, either that of his own or of those about whom he knew; and it has been made a part of the inspired record. It was true when the words were originally spoken, and the statement is still true today. One of the very best commentaries which we have on the passage is found a little farther on in the Book of Proverbs. "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? Who hath complaining? who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek out mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it sparkleth in the cup, when it goeth down smoothly: at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange things, and thy heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not hurt; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." (Prov. 23: 29-35.)

The Christian alternative to such a drunken state is expressed by Paul in these words: "Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but

as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit; speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; subjecting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ." (Eph. 5: 15-21.)

It would be difficult to imagine a greater contrast between the lives of people who are motivated by the "spirit" of strong drink, and that which is filled with the Spirit of God. The one results in a life after the flesh, while the other continues to hear the fruit of the Spirit. (See Gal. 5: 16-24.) In the words of the golden text, "Wine is a mocker," that is, a scoffer—one who shows scorn in derision or mockery, and "strong drink a brawler," that is, results in great commotion or tumult; "and whosoever erreth therein is not wise." People who are in their normal state of mind do not appreciate being mocked or treated with scorn, but that is exactly what is happening to them when they are under the influence of strong drink. The golden text personifies strong drink, and pictures it as having the mastery over its victim.

## The Text Explained

**The Impending Doom of Samaria**  
(Isa. 28: 1-4)

**Woe to the crown of pride of the**

**drunkards of Ephraim, and to the fading flower of his glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat val-**



ley of them that are overcome with wine! Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one; as a tempest of hail, a destroying storm, as a tempest of mighty waters overflowing, will he cast down to the earth with the hand. The crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim shall be trodden under foot; and the fading flower of his glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley shall be as the first-ripe fig before the summer; which when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up.

Both the northern and southern kingdoms of God's people were in existence during much of the time of Isaiah's prophetic ministry; and while his principal work was with reference to Judah, he did often speak against the sins of Israel. Judah was the dominant tribe of the southern kingdom, and that realm therefore was often referred to simply as Judah. And in a similar manner, the name Ephraim, because of that tribe's position of influence, was given to the northern kingdom. The kingdom of Israel was the richer of the two, and the figures of speech which Isaiah used with reference to that portion of God's people was due to the strategic and prosperous conditions of the northern realm. The land of Palestine, the home of Israel and Judah, was a land which flowed with milk and honey; and it was likewise a land of orchards and vineyards, to change the figure somewhat, all of which meant that it was potentially a land of great plenty and prosperity. Isaiah is noted for his lofty language, and it was used in the instance now before us to describe the fading beauty of the rapidly deteriorating kingdom of Israel.

Isaiah was keenly aware of the economic and social significance of intemperance and unwarranted luxury, and he warned all of God's people regarding such sins. As he viewed the situation, wealth and personal ability were trusts from God, to be faithfully administered for the glory of God and the welfare of society. This was clearly uppermost in the prophet's mind when he denounced the people of his own land who manifested a zeal in satisfying their own appetites. "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink;

that tarry late into the night, till wine inflame them! And the harp and the lute, the tabret and the pipe, and the wine are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of Jehovah, neither have they considered the operation of his hands." (Isa. 5: 11-12.)

"Therefore my people are gone into captivity for lack of knowledge; and their honorable men are famished, and their multitude are parched with thirst. Therefore S h e o 1 hath enlarged its desire, and opened its mouth without measure, and their glory and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth among them, descend into it. And the mean man is bowed down, and the great man is humbled, and the eyes of the lofty are humbled: but Jehovah of hosts is exalted in justice, and God the Holy One is sanctified in righteousness. Then shall the lambs feed as in their pasture, and the waste places of the fat ones shall wanderers eat." (Isa. 5: 13-17.)

We are told that the word "alcohol" comes from two Arabic words, *el gohul*, which mean the *great evil spirit*; and if that is true, then that substance is certainly well named. It was an evil spirit which took possession of men who consumed it, and the result was that they were no longer their own masters. And what was true when the "spirit" was first given the name just referred to, is just as true now; for no one who places himself under the influence of that evil spirit can control himself. The prodigal son "wasted his substance with riotous living," and the result was that he was no longer in control of himself. (See Luke 15: 13, 17.)

The destruction to which Isaiah referred in the section of the lesson text now under consideration was that which the Assyrians brought upon the northern kingdom. It was the result of their unfaithfulness. One of the chief sins of which they were guilty was that of intemperance; and, as in the case of those mentioned in the quotation from Isa. 5, God's people went into captivity for lack of knowledge. (Cf. Hos. 4: 6.) It was not because they could not have known better, but when they placed themselves under the control of strong drink their senses were dulled, and they were brought under the

control of another. This is still true of those who give themselves over to those things which are not fitting. No one can be a slave to alcoholic beverages and still be pleasing to God. When will responsible people learn this lesson?

#### A Gracious Promise for the Remnant

(Isa. 28: 5, 6)

*In that day will Jehovah of hosts become a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people; and a spirit of justice to him that sitteth in judgment, and strength to them that turn back the battle at the gate.*

As already indicated, the previous section of the lesson text had direct reference to the kingdom of Israel, which was about to be taken into captivity by the Assyrians; but in this portion of the text, the prophet turns to Judah. In contrast with "the fading flower of his glorious beauty," that is, of Israel, Jehovah would become to Judah "a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty." He would also be "a spirit of justice to him that sitteth in judgment, and strength to them that turn back the battle at the gate." When the leaders are willing to do that which is right, then they can always count on the Lord for moral and spiritual strength, and when they are called upon to meet the enemy, they can always count upon the Lord for the strength they need. The primary reference was probably to that which took place during the righteous reign of Hezekiah, but the principle is applicable in all ages of the world. The kingdom of Judah continued for about one hundred and thirty-four years after the fall of Israel.

One lesson which many of the Lord's people, even today, have apparently failed to learn is that it is not necessary for them to do wrong, just because the majority are rebelling against him. God has always promised to be with his people, regardless of how small the number may be, if they will do their best to serve him. The divine promise has always been to "him that overcometh." In his letter to the angel of the church, in Sardis, Jesus said that he had "found no works of thine perfected before my God;" but even that did not mean that every member of that church had failed to meet

the Lord's approval. "But thou hast a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments; and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy. He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." (See Rev. 3: 1-6.)

#### Condemnation of the Drunken Court in Jerusalem

(Isa. 28: 7-13)

*And even these reel with wine, and stagger with strong drink; the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they stagger with strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. . . For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.*

It would be difficult to visualize a more revolting scene than the one which Isaiah described; but if that was true of the "best" of the leaders, what must have been the state of affairs with reference to those who were not directly concerned with religious teaching! Jehovah gave specific instruction with reference to the consumption of wine by the priests (cf. Lev. 10: 9; Ezek. 44: 21); but when people decide to have their own way regarding their desires and appetites, it makes little difference with them what the Lord has said. Thomas Jefferson once said that "the habit of intemperance by men in office has occasioned more injury to the public, and more trouble to me, than all other causes; and, were I to commence my administration again, the first question I would ask respecting a candidate for office, would be, 'Does he use ardent spirits?'"

A scene like that which Isaiah described in the center of Judah's religious activities would hardly be found in the church today; but it is not difficult to find religious leaders today who are not only "social drinkers" themselves, but who look with displeasure upon those godly men and women who insist that God expects his people, and especially those who are leaders in his work, to be careful to abstain from any practice which is calculated to bring reproach upon the church and the name of the Lord. The whole question of the

Christian's attitude toward the personal use of strong drink is, basically, one of attitude. If he is motivated by a spirit of selfishness, then he may easily persuade himself that there is no harm in the practice of moderate drinking; but if his whole aim is to please God (cf. 2 Cor. 5: 9, 10), then he will allow nothing to come into his life concerning which he cannot, in all good conscience, ask the Father to bless him while engaged in its practice. (Cf. Col. 3: 17; 1 Cor. 10: 31-33.)

*Whom will he teach knowledge? and whom will he make to understand the message? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts? For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little.*

The paragraph which has just been quoted (verses 9, 10) contain the drunken reply of the scoffers (see verse 14) to Isaiah's condemnation of them. It was as if they had retorted, "Here he is, the great teacher! And whom does he think that he is going to teach? children? mere infants who are drawn away from the breast to hear him? You and your eternal repetition of lessons designed only for children—just a little at the time!" Adam Clarke, in commenting on this passage says, ". . . they treat God's method of dealing with them, and warning them by his prophets, with contempt and derision. What, say they, doth he treat us as mere infants just weaned? doth he teach us like little children, perpetually inculcating the same elementary lessons, the mere rudiments of knowledge; . . .?"

Both Jesus and Paul encountered that same attitude on the part of the People whom they tried to teach God's will. (Cf. Matt. 13: 10-15; Heb. 5: 11-14.) And any faithful teacher of God's word today knows that such is by no means uncommon in our own generation. There are people on every side today who have to be taught in the simplest fashion, if at all; and many who are in dire need of having their attention called to God's will regarding them, have only contempt and derision for those who attempt to turn their attention to the Lord. But the teacher of God's word has no other choice in the matter, as may be seen by reading Paul's in-

struction to Timothy, in his final letter. "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." (2 Tim. 4: 1-5; cf. 1 Cor. 16: 10, 11; Tit. 2: 15.) It is a dangerous thing for anyone to treat with contempt any faithful teacher of God's word.

*Nay, but by men of strange lips and with another tongue will he speak to this people; to whom he said, This is the rest, give ye rest to him that is weary; and this is the refreshing; yet they would not hear. Therefore shall the word of Jehovah be unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little; that they may go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.*

Isaiah was unmoved as he listened to the contemptuous derision of the scorners who sat at the tables of filth before him; but when they had finished, he calmly told them that they would indeed hear God's message to them. However, as he reminded them, it would be presented by a different messenger, a messenger whose speech they would not understand; for their teacher would come from another country, namely, the Assyrians and the Babylonians. Paul quoted Isaiah's language in his letter to the Corinthians, as he sought to teach them the truth regarding the use of tongues. (See 1 Cor. 14: 21.)

The lesson here cannot be too greatly emphasized; for as certain as God remains in heaven, his word is going to be impressed upon those for whom it is intended, in one way or another. (Cf. Isa. 55: 10, 11.) People may reject the message and despise the messenger; but the time is coming when they will bow before

Jesus, and will confess that he is both Lord and Christ, to God's glory, even if it is to their eternal shame. Israel was characterized by idolatrous worship from the time they left Egypt, until they were taken into Babylonian captivity, where they were subjected to teachers of strange tongues; but it is a fact, capable of demonstration, that when they returned to their homeland, they never again bowed before an idol.

People may make light of the simple method which God employs in teaching them, and they may scoff at

the repetition which the teacher employs; but any informed person knows that the secret of all successful teaching is that of repetition and review. That has been God's method throughout the ages; and if we are ever to learn to be like him, we must accept his method of teaching and learning. The same method which the people before Isaiah scornfully ridiculed was employed by their captors in a foreign land; and while the process was much more painful than that of the prophet, its success was unmistakable.

### Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

#### Introduction

What is the purpose of the lesson we are to study today?

What can you say of its importance? Give reasons for your answer.

What is the usual course one takes when he begins to drink alcohol as a beverage?

Discuss some of the domestic evils of drunkenness.

What are some of the effects which show up in one's health?

#### The Golden Text

Why is this text such an important one for us to remember?

What inspired commentary do we have on it?

What is the Christian alternative to drunkenness?

Discuss the contrast between a drunkard and one who is filled with the Holy Spirit.

#### The Impending Doom of Samaria

In what way did Isaiah speak of the waning kingdom of Israel?

What part did drunkenness play in the fall of the northern kingdom?

What did the prophet also say regarding the folly and fate of Judah?

What is the probable origin of the term "alcohol"?

Give a scriptural illustration of the manner in which the "evil spirit" conquers man.

Who took the kingdom of Israel into captivity?

Why say that the Lord's people went into captivity for the lack of knowledge?

Why can't responsible people learn this lesson?

#### A Gracious Promise for the Remnant

Who were the "remnant" and what promise was made to them?

What lesson should we learn from this?

Why is the Lord always willing to encourage his people when they do right?

Is it necessary for one to do wrong just because the majority of people do?

Give reasons for your answer.

#### Condemnation of the Drunken Court in Jerusalem

How do you account for such an evil condition as that described by Isaiah?

What had Jehovah said regarding drinking on the part of the priests?

In what way is this portion of the lesson text applicable to church leaders today?

What can you say of the problem of "social drinking" in the church today?

What is the basic issue regarding Christians and strong drink?

What usually determines whether one does or does not engage in such a practice?

Why is the question of "motive" so important in one's life?

How did the people of Isaiah's time react to his condemnation of their practice?

Why is it often necessary for the teachers of God's will to treat those whom they try to teach as mere infants?

Discuss the experience of Jesus and Paul in this respect.

What instruction did Paul give Timothy regarding his teaching?

What warning did Paul give to those who are taught the will of God?

In what way did Isaiah reply to the drunken crowd before him?

What has God promised with regard to his word which goes forth out of his mouth?

What lesson should we learn from this?

In what way did Isaiah say that God would teach his rebellious people?

Why was that type of teaching necessary?

### Lesson VI—February 9, 1964

## ISAIAH'S PICTURE OF ZION

### Lesson Text

Isa. 35: 1-10

1 The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.

2 It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Leb'-a-non shall be given

unto it, the excellency of Car'-mel and Shar'-on: they shall see the glory of Je-ho'-vah, the excellency of our God.

3 Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees.

4 Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come *with* vengeance, *with* the recompense of God; he will come and save you.

5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

6 Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

7 And the glowing sand shall be-

**Golden Text.**—"The tongue of the dumb shall sing." (Isa. 35: 6.)

**Devotional Reading.**—Isa. 32: 1-8.

### Daily Bible Readings

February 3. M.....	Literal Zion (1 Kings 8: 1; 2 Chron. 5: 2)
February 4. T.....	Figurative Zion (Heb. 12: 18-29)
February 5. W.....	A Lamb on Mount Zion (Rev. 14: 1-10)
February 6. T.....	Word of the Lord from Zion (Isa. 2: 1-4)
February 7. F.....	Blessings Out of Zion (Psalm 128: 1-15)
February 8. S.....	Holy Hill of Zion (Psalm 2: 1-6)
February 9. S.....	Lord Loves Zion (Psalm 87: 1, 2)

**Time.**—713 B.C.

**Place.**—Jerusalem.

**Persons.**—Isaiah and God's people.

### Introduction

The thirty-fifth chapter of Isaiah should be read in conjunction with the preceding chapter, the chapter which graphically sets forth God's curse upon the nations, especially Edom as the representative of the enemies and tormentors of his people. The second paragraph of that chapter reads as follows: "For Jehovah hath a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion. And the streams of Edom shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever; from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever. But the pelican and the porcupine shall possess it; and the owl and the raven shall dwell therein: and he will stretch over it the line of confusion, and the plummet of emptiness. They

come a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water: in the habitation of jackals, where they lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

8 And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for *the redeemed*: the wayfaring men, yea fools, shall not err *therein*.

9 No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast go up thereon; they shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk *there*:

10 And the ransomed of Je-ho'-vah shall return, and come with singing unto ZI-on; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none shall be there: and all its princes shall be nothing. And the thorns shall come up in its palaces, nettles and thistles in the fortresses thereof; and it shall be a habitation of jackals, a court for ostriches. And the wild beasts of the desert shall meet with the wolves, and the wild goat shall cry to his fellow; yea, the night-monster shall settle there, and shall find her a place of rest. There shall the dart-snake make her nest, and lay, and hatch, and gather under her shade: yea, there shall the kites be gathered every one with her mate." (Isa. 34: 8-15.)

And now, over against this gruesome picture, read the chapter which we are to study today. It has been called the most beautiful passage in the entire Bible. It is the triumphant song of Israel's homecoming. When these words were spoken by

Isaiah, the people were pictured as being in Babylon captivity, and were longing for the day of their deliverance. But while looking forward to the time of their release from captivity, they were also wondering how they were to pass through the great and terrible wilderness which lay between them and their homeland—a pathless waste, the haunt of ravenous beasts and strange terrors. Their hearts would sink as they thought on these things, and they doubtless wondered if their hopes and dreams would ever come true. This picture of the future must be understood, if we are to grasp the meaning of Isaiah's message in the chapter now before us.

It was with that kind of a situation in mind that the stirring words of Isaiah were spoken, and their purpose was to arouse and give courage to God's people. They were assured that the day of their redemption was drawing near, and that the work would be brought to a glorious consummation. All the terrors of the great wilderness would be removed, and they would be brought safely home. One of the most inspiring features of the prophecy was the prom-

ise of a highway through the desert; and it was on this promise that "the poetry of the chapter gathers and reaches its climax." Such a highway, easy to travel and free from all dangers, would meet their greatest need. This was the Divine answer to all their fears and questionings.

It should be obvious to every thoughtful student that Isaiah was looking beyond the captive Hebrews when he spoke his words of encouragement; for much of his prophecy is Messianic in its character. And with this in mind, we should take great courage ourselves for the King's highway, the new and living way, meets our every need. The early disciples were wont to speak of the new life in Christ as "the Way." (Cf. Acts 22: 4.) The term "way" is a most proper and suggestive designation, reminding us, as it does, that the work of Christ and the purpose of his gospel is to open up and prepare the way, along which the redeemed of the earth may return and come with singing to their eternal home. There are some beautiful and reassuring things said about this highway of holiness, as we shall see further on in our study today.

## The Golden Text

This portion of the lesson is in the main text, and it will be considered in its regular order.

## The Text Explained

### Barrenness Transformed into Beauty

(Isa. 35: 1, 2)

*The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of Jehovah, the excellency of our God.*

Those who are familiar with the Book of Isaiah are aware of the fact that the prophet sometimes takes situations which are characterized with conditions which are wholly antagonistic, and pictures them as becoming, not only reconciled to each other, but also in complete harmony and full fellowship. (Cf., for example, Isa. 11: 6-9.) The idea behind all of this is the transforming power of Jehovah. When people who are completely antagonistic to each other

are willing to submit themselves to God's will, there is hardly any limit to the changes which he can bring about in their lives. This is the lesson which we are to learn in this section of the lesson text. The barren wilderness not only holds out no hope for the weary traveller, or the prospective traveller, but it also poses a distinct threat to both his life and safety, if he attempts to cross it. Such a desert is a formidable barrier to the blessings which the exile so desperately wants and needs.

The complete transformation of nature was figuratively presented to indicate the provisions which God would make for the return of his penitent people. The beauty of Lebanon with its mighty forests, Carmel with its leafy fertility, and Sharon with its broad plains and fertile fields, were all proverbial; and no figures of speech would be more suggestive to the Israelites than the

ones which related to them. All of this, of course, was meant to add to the enjoyment of the exiles, somewhat after the fashion in which the glories of heaven are pictured for us. (Cf. Rev., chapters 21, 22.) When the prodigal son returned from the far country to the home of his father, the occasion was the signal for great rejoicing. After an affectionate greeting and the protestation of the son who had done so much to grieve his father, we read, "But the father said to his servants, Bring forth quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and make merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry." (Luke 15: 22-24.) All of these illustrations are meant to show how God feels and what he is willing to do to encourage his people when they are ready to return to him from their sinful ways.

#### Strength for the Journey

(Isa. 35: 3, 4)

*Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; he will come and save you.*

As already indicated, Isaiah was speaking primarily of Israel's return from their captivity in Babylon, but the prophecy was by no means limited to that occasion. God had sent them into the land of the Chaldeans because of their sins; but when the time came for their return to their homeland, God wanted them to know that he would both give them the strength for the journey and would see to it that they would have the protection which they needed for the long and arduous trip across the desert. But the experiences of fleshly Israel can have a meaning for us; for the chapter now before us is a perfect example of the promise of God to penitent people of all ages. When anyone shows a disposition to return to God from his sinful ways, the Lord is always ready to meet him, and to supply whatever is needed to complete the journey. There is no such thing as an impossibility to re-

turn to God, if the penitent is willing to do his part.

But just as Isaiah was told to strengthen the weak hands, confirm the feeble knees, and speak words of encouragement to the fearful of heart, so should we do today. It is not always easy for those who have been taken captive by the devil to leave his sphere of influence, and return to the Father. Peter was told by Jesus to establish his brethren, after he was rescued from sin; and Paul urges the spiritual to restore the weak in a spirit of gentleness; looking to themselves, lest they also be tempted. He further exhorts, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." (Read Luke 22: 31, 32; Gal. 6: 1, 2.) Christ was sent into the world to make it possible for man to be delivered out of the power of darkness, and to be translated into the kingdom of the Son of God's love (Col. 1: 13); but those who have tasted of this salvation and are safe in the fellowship of the Lord, must be willing to do their part in helping others to return to the fold. (Cf. 2 Tim. 2: 24-26.)

#### The Glorious Consummation

(Isa. 35: 5-10)

*Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the glowing sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water: in the habitation of jackals, where they lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes.*

This highly figurative language is intended to show something of the condition of the pilgrims as they begin the long journey homeward, or as they are ready to begin it. But the principal lesson is for us, that is, for those who are crossing, as it were, a great moral desert toward the kingdom or church of Christ. Or, to state the same truths in another way, Isaiah's prophecy was with particular reference to the Messianic kingdom toward which the pious Jews were looking. The things which Isaiah predicted here and elsewhere in his messages became also the theme of Christ and his apostles. "Now when John heard in the prison the works

of the Christ, he sent by his disciples and said unto him, Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and tell John the things which ye hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me." (Matt. 11: 2-6.)

As Jesus was beginning his Galilean ministry, "he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And he opened the book, and found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor: he hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." (Luke 4: 16-19.) This quotation was from the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah, and there are two principal lessons which we should learn from it, namely, (1) The New Testament writers recognized the quotation as being from the book of the prophet Isaiah, notwithstanding the fact that modern scholars think that a second or even a third Isaiah wrote the section of the book from which the quotation is taken; and (2) Jesus himself gave the spiritual interpretation of what Isaiah meant by saying that the captives would have their eyes opened, et cetera.

*And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The highway of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for the redeemed: the wayfaring men, yea fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast go up thereon; they shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: and the ransomed of Jehovah shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

For sheer beauty of expression,

the words which Isaiah used to describe the way to the Lord are unexcelled; and there is no doubt that they are intended for all men at all times, so long as the world shall last. This is the way which Christ has opened up for us (Heb. 10: 20); and those who in faith commit themselves to it will experience the transformation of all things. "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new." (2 Cor. 5: 17.) The eyes of faith are now opened, the ears which were once dull of hearing are now quick to perceive that which the Lord commands, and the one time hesitant feet are swift and sure in the new pathway. Life outside the highway of duty is still dangerous, but those who are careful to walk with the Lord are sure of his protection. (Read Rom. 8: 31-39.) The entire Christian life is one of gladness, in a living faith; and love, which motivates all things, is sure to find its reward. The prophet's vision of the future has been transformed into a fact; and that which was at one time a beautiful expression of hope, is now an experience in reality. The way is now open, and the voice still calls, "This is the way, walk ye in it" (Isa. 30: 21); and those who will do so by faith will be able to claim the promise of gladness and joy, and will find that sorrow and sighing shall flee away. There are several facts concerning this way which we should carefully consider.

1. *It is a designated way.* Inasmuch as this is the King's highway, we must understand that it is an *appointed* way. (Cf. John 14: 1-6.) This implies, of course, that we are not at liberty to exercise our judgment or our own desires with reference to the things which pertain to it. (See Heb. 2: 1-3.) Those who enter this way are directed into it by divine authority (John 6: 44, 45; Gal. 1: 6-9; 3: 26, 27); and their entire journey is under divine direction (Matt. 28: 18-20; Eph. 1: 22, 23). The way is described as "The way of holiness," and that means that it is the way of God's commandments; for in no other way can one become anti remain holy. (Cf. Jer. 6: 16; Acts 10: 34, 35.)

2. *It is a plain way.* Some desert tracks are so indistinct, or so con-



fusing, as to make it exceedingly difficult to follow them; but that is not true of the highway of holiness. It may be narrow, but it is plain; and there is ample room for all the redeemed to walk therein. It is not hedged in by any intellectual difficulties or cunning subtleties, which only the wise and learned can trace out. (Cf. Matt. 11: 25-30; John 7:

17.) If this way is not plain, then it cannot be said that the gospel is for all men; but that is exactly the claim which Jesus makes for it. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16: 15); and we have Paul's word for it that that is precisely what was done during the first thirty years of the church's history. (See Col. 1: 23.) Jesus came to save sinners of the human race, at all levels of individual responsibility; and that made it essential that his way be characterized by simplicity. In fact, the very simplicity of the Lord's way has become a stumblingblock to many. (Cf. 2 Kings 5: 8-14; 1 Cor. 1: 23, 24.)

3. *It is a safe way.* The people who travel this road "are protected from the dangers which are common to man, to the extent that their final salvation will never be endangered. (See 1 Cor. 10: 13; James 1: 2-8; 2 Cor. 12: 7-10; Matt. 28: 20; Rom. 8: 28, 31-39.) The text now before us is but a practical way of saying that

the path of life, though narrow and arduous, guarantees safety to those who walk in it. Snares and dangers are always to be found in the byways; but they are not in the way itself. "No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast go up thereon; they shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there." As a further illustration of the dangers which are outside the way, compare the many pictures which Bunyan gives in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. (See also Paul's statement regarding the love of money, 1 Tim. 6: 9, 10; Jacob's deceit; Samson's ungodliness; and David's lust.) These byways always lead to sorrow and distress. Anyone who realizes anything about the seriousness of life is aware of the many perils, both seen and unseen; and he certainly feels the need of a way which is safe. (Cf. Psalm 27: 11; Isa. 30: 20, 21.)

4. *It is a homeward way.* The way

which the Lord has provided both promises and makes certain a safe arrival at the journey's end. Those therefore who walk in this way always have the satisfaction of knowing that they are homeward bound. The whole value and significance of a road depends upon where it leads to. It doesn't matter how pleasant it may be, it will bring no permanent blessing to anyone, if it does not lead to the desired end. Thus, before one enters into any course in life, he should ask, Where does this road lead? and what lies at the end of the way? These are very important questions; for after one has chosen a road and followed it for much of his lifetime, it is not always easy for him to turn back, or chose a new way. Not only does the way of the Lord lead home, but the joys of those who travel it increase as they draw nearer and nearer to their journey's end. "But the path of the righteous is as the dawning light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." (Prov. 4: 18.)

Saul of Tarsus entered the highway of holiness, the new and living way, as soon as he learned what was expected of him after meeting the Lord on the Damascus road; and anyone who is familiar with his life as a Christian knows that he was faithful therein to the end of the way. Just a short time before he left the earth to be with Jesus, he wrote his final letter which has come down to us, and in it he said this: "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: 6-8.)

The point to emphasize in the quotation just given is the fact that Paul "finished the course." The article, which is in the original, indicates that the race which Paul ran was on a marked-out and well-defined track; and the implication is that he did more than run his natural earthly course; he fulfilled his God-appointed destiny. No one will ever get to heaven by accident: he must enter the way which the Lord has made

possible, and he must continue in it until he reaches the end. "Jesus said unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John

14: 6.) "And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved." (Acts 4: 12.)

### Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

#### Introduction

Give the setting of the chapter which serves as our lesson text for today.

What is the principal purpose of this chapter?

What was the condition of the people about whom Isaiah spoke?

What would be the significance of the promise to them of a highway across the desert to their homeland?

What was Isaiah's ultimate purpose in speaking of the highway?

How did the early Christians speak of their life in Christ?

#### Barrenness Transformed into Beauty

In what way did Isaiah sometimes picture the things of which he spoke?

What will always take place in the lives of people when they allow God to have his way with them?

What was meant by the transformation of the wilderness?

What application does the lesson have for us?

#### Strength for the Journey

What promise did Jehovah make to the captive people regarding their journey home?

What meaning does this have for us?

What message has the Lord given to us regarding our encouragement of one another?

#### The Glorious Consummation

How do we know that Isaiah used figurative language in describing the glorious consummation?

What kind of wilderness must we cross in order to reach Christ? Give reasons for your answer.

How do we know that Isaiah was looking

beyond fleshly Israel to the time of Christ?

Discuss the work which Christ came to do?

What particular lessons do we learn from Luke's quotation from Isaiah?

What is the "highway of holiness," so far as we are concerned?

In what sense are our eyes opened, our ears unstopped, and our lameness cured?

Why is the entire Christian life one of gladness for those who are truly converted?

What is meant by saying that the highway of holiness is a designated way?

What does this fact signify, so far as we are concerned?

How do people today enter this way?

Under what condition must they continue to travel this highway?

What makes it a way of holiness?

Why is it essential that the way be a plain one?

How do we know that it is a plain road?

Why does it sometimes become a stumblingblock to those who should enter it?

What is meant by saying that the way is a safe road to travel?

Wherein does its safety lie?

Under what circumstances do people encounter dangers along the way?

What is our responsibility with reference to these dangers?

Why do we speak of this highway as a homeward way?

What questions should people always ask before entering into any way?

Why are such questions important?

What is always true of this way as the pilgrims come closer to its end?

Show how the life of the apostle Paul illustrates the journey on the highway of holiness.

What did he mean by saying that he had "finished the course"?

Why can't people go to heaven by accident? Give reasons for your answer.

## Lesson VII—February 16, 1964

# GOD COMFORTS HIS PEOPLE

### Lesson Text

Isa. 40: 1-11

1 Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

2 Speak ye comfortably to Je-ru-sa-lem; and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she hath received of Je-ho'-vah's hand double for all her sins.

3 The voice of one that crieth, Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Je-ho'-vah; make level in the desert a highway for our God.

4 Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the uneven shall be made level, and the rough places a plain:

5 And the glory of Je-ho'-vah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of Je-ho'-vah hath spoken it.

6 The voice of one saying, Cry. And one said, What shall I cry? All

flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field.

7 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the breath of Je-ho'-vah bloweth upon it; surely the people is grass.

8 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand forever.

9 O thou that tellest good tidings to Zi-on, get thee up on a high mountain; O thou that tellest good tidings to Je-ru'-sa-lem, lift up thy

voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Ju'-dah, Behold, your God!

10 Behold, the Lord Je-ho'-vah will come as a mighty one, and his arm will rule for him: Behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.

11 He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arm, and carry them in his bosom, *and* will gently lead those that have their young.

**Golden Text.**—*"They that wait for Jehovah shall renew their strength they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary they shall walk, and not faint."* (Isa. 40: 31.)

**Devotional Reading.**—Isa. 40: 12-25.

## Daily Bible Readings

February 10. M..... Comfort in Sorrow (Psalm 30: 1-5)  
 February 11. T..... Another Comforter (John 14: 15-24)  
 February 12. W..... Jesus A Comforter (Luke 4: 14-19)  
 February 13. T..... Comfort to Those Who Suffer (1 Pet. 4: 1-16)  
 February 14. F..... The God of All Comfort (2 Cor. 1: 3-11)  
 February 15. S..... Comfort in Affliction (Psalm 119: 50, 93)  
 February 16. S..... Comfort Assured (1 Thess. 4: 18; 2 Thess. 2: 16, 17)

**Time.**—712 B.C.

**Place.**—Jerusalem.

**PERSONS.**—Isaiah and the people of Judah.

## Introduction

The pattern which we saw in the previous lesson is also apparent in the one now before us. Chapter 38 tells of Hezekiah's near-fatal illness and his recovery, while chapter 39 records the facts of the visit of a messenger from the king of Babylon, with letters and a present for the king of Judah. Hezekiah was delighted with this kindness, and promptly showed the Babylonians his entire house and all his treasures: "there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not." This thoughtless conduct on the part of the king of Judah may seem to some as being relatively unimportant, but it became the occasion for an inspired prediction regarding the forthcoming captivity of the kingdom of Judah, as may be seen by reading the remainder of chapter 39.

"Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, even from Babylon. Then said he, What have they seen in thy house? And Heze-

kiah answered, All that is in my house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not showed them. Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of Jehovah of hosts: Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in thy house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith Jehovah. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, whom thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of Jehovah which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days." (Isa. 39: 3-8.)

In our last lesson we saw something of the terrible mischief which came to Israel as a result of their enemies, but we also saw the gracious promise of Jehovah in regard to their deliverance from their captivity. And so, in the lesson now before us, we learn of the threatened bondage, and then of the glorious provisions which Jehovah made for their ultimate freedom and safety. The immediate

reference of the prophecy of chapter 40 was to the captive Israelites, but it appears quite obvious that the prophet was looking beyond the plight of Judah to the coming of the Messiah and the redemption of all people from the bondage of sin. It was always God's will that his peo-

ple should enjoy his blessings, but when sin entered in among them and they chose to follow the lead of the evil one, suffering and punishment were inevitable. However, God's mercy is always in evidence, as he continues to make provisions for the comfort of his penitent people.

### The Golden Text

*"But they that wait for Jehovah shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint."* This is the Lord's answer to those who felt that he had forgotten them, as may be seen by reading the entire paragraph from which the golden text is taken. "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from Jehovah, and the justice due to me is passed away from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard? The everlasting God, Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary; there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; to him that hath no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait for Jehovah shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint." (Isa. 40: 27-31.)

To wait for Jehovah is to have confidence in him—to trust him to bring order out of chaos, to make all things work together for good, to them that love God and are called according to his purpose. This does not mean that we are to do nothing while we wait for him; it rather implies that we shall do our best, but that we will trust in the Lord for strength and for the performance of that which we are unable, in and of ourselves, to accomplish. Waiting for Jehovah is in sharp contrast with watching current events. When our minds are fixed upon those things which are taking place around us, we may become bewildered and frustrated, for we do not know what to expect; but

if we will put our trust in Jehovah, who knows the end from the beginning, and who is omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient, then we need have no fear of the ultimate outcome. Or, to state the same thing in another way, If one is willing to accept what the Bible says about God (and he cannot please him if he does not, Heb. 11: 6); if he believes that God is good and only good, and that he is all-wise, ever-present, and has the power to bless beyond one's ability to ask or think, how can he fail to trust him, or be indifferent about his privilege of calling upon him in prayer?

The results which follow the waiting for Jehovah are set forth in these words: (1) they shall renew their strength; (2) they shall mount up with wings as eagles; (3) they shall run, and not be weary; and (4) they shall walk, and not faint. The last three are illustrations of the first. When people's strength is renewed, they can do that which would otherwise be impossible. This was Paul's experience. "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." (2 Cor. 12: 9, 10.) "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me." (Phil. 4: 13.) And in the words of Moses, "And as thy days, so shall thy strength be." (Deut. 33: 25.) God will give his people strength for whatever their work in his service may require.

### The Text Explained

Comforting Promises and the  
Message of the Harbinger  
(Isa. 40: 1-5)

*Comfort ye, comfort ye my people,  
saith your God. Speak ye comfort-*

*ably to Jerusalem; and cry unto her,  
that her warfare is accomplished, that  
her iniquity is pardoned, that she  
hath received of Jehovah's hand dou-  
ble for all her sins.*

Inasmuch as the chapter from which our lesson text for today is taken is looked upon by many Bible students as the beginning of what they call Second Isaiah, it may be well to note the following timely statement from Adam Clarke regarding the relation of this portion of the prophecy with that which goes before. Attention has already been called in these studies to the fact that Christ and the New Testament writers do not recognize any such thing as Two Isaiahs as the authors of the Book of Isaiah. The whole book is regarded by them as the work of the prophet Isaiah. (See Luke 4: 17-19, where the reference is to Isa. 61. which according to these modern scholars would be either Second or Third Isaiah.) Dr. Clarke's statement follows:

"The course of prophecies which follow, from hence to the end of the book, and which taken together constitute the most elegant part of the sacred writings of the Old Testament, interspersed also with many passages of the highest solemnity, was probably delivered in the latter part of the reign of Hezekiah. The prophet in the foregoing chapter had delivered a very explicit declaration of the impending dissolution of the kingdom, and of the captivity of the royal house of David, and of the people, under the kings of Babylon. As the subject of his subsequent prophecies was to be chiefly of the consolatory kind, he opens them with giving a promise of the restoration of the kingdom, and the return of the people from their captivity, by the merciful interposition of God in their favor. But the views of the prophet are not confined to this event. As the restoration of the royal family, and of the tribe of Judah, which would otherwise have soon become undistinguished, and have been irrecoverably lost, was necessary, in the design and order of Providence, for the fulfilling of God's promises of establishing a more glorious and an everlasting kingdom, under the Messiah to be born of the tribe of Judah, and of the family of David, the prophet connects these two events together, and hardly ever treats of the former without throwing in some intimations of the latter; and sometimes is so fully possessed with the glories of the future and more re-

mote kingdom, that he seems to leave the more immediate subject of his commission almost out of the question."

The word "comfort" is a strong term, and its practical meaning is that of *bracing*, rather than *soothing*. Those who are comforted are indeed soothed, but they also are made stronger. The application, so far as we are concerned, indicates the strength which comes from companionship with the Lord (cf. 1 John 1: 6, 7; 2 Cor. 12: 7-10). This sense is contained in the root meaning of the word itself, namely, "fortitude in alliance with some one;" and when that some *one* is the Lord, we can begin to see how it is possible for the Christian to be strong and courageous, rather than weak and fearful. Isaiah was speaking as if the people had just about completed their period of captivity, and were about to be restored to their former relationship with the Lord. Their punishment and suffering had been adequate for their sins, and pardon would soon be theirs.

The story is told of a teacher of young men who were preparing for the ministry who frequently said to them, "Gentlemen, when you are uncertain, as you will often be, on what subject to preach, you cannot be wrong in following the line indicated by the prophet's cry, 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably' For the truest ministry is the ministry of comfort. You are not ordained to give good advice, but to preach glad tidings." Any thoughtful person will recognize this as being wise counsel; for the gospel is above all else a message of comfort, a declaration of the kindness and love of God, and an assurance that the heavenly Father will not permit his children to be tempted beyond their ability to bear; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that they may be able to endure it (1 Cor. 10: 13).

*The voice of one that crieth, Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jehovah; make level in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the uneven shall be made level, and the rough places a plain: and the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed,*

*and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.*

Isaiah's statement which has just been quoted was apparently fashioned after a well known practice among oriental monarchs. It was their custom, when they were about to travel through any part of their dominion, to send heralds before them to announce their coming, and to see that the highways over which they were to pass were in order. Any obstacle which might be in the way had to be removed, and all rough places had to be made smooth. If no highway existed in that part of the country, then one would have to be constructed, even if it required the filling up of valleys and other low places, and the cutting down of mountains and hills. This was a striking illustration of the levelling influence which the forerunner of Jesus, John the Baptist, came to exert. It means, in short, that the people had to be prepared for the coming of Christ, which, of course, involved the correction of anything in their lives which did not please God. All of this was implied in the repentance which John preached. (Read Matt. 3:1-12.)

### The Eternal versus the Transient

(Isa. 40: 6-8)

*The voice of one saying, Cry. And one said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the breath of Jehovah bloweth upon it; surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever.*

In the preceding section of the lesson text, the prophet spoke in general terms regarding God's promise of comfort for his people, and of the message of the harbinger; but in this section he is going to be more specific. When people are in great distress and do not know which way to turn, it is then that God can and will help them, if they are willing to listen to him. All through their history, the people of Israel had been used to a "fleshly religion," but with the coming of Christ that would be changed; for Christianity emphasizes the spirit, rather than the flesh. With their background to shape their thinking, the captives would be disposed to

regard the promise of comfort and the highway across the wilderness as pertaining primarily to their national restoration; but Isaiah hastens, as he spoke for Jehovah, to assure them that it would mean more than that.

While expressed in figurative language, the practical meaning is that the old order of things would give way to the new; and that all of this would result, not from anything which human beings would or could do, but from God's eternal word. Even the domination of the Babylonians over their captives would not stand in the way, nor anything else for which men are responsible. The gospel dispensation is of the Spirit, rather than of the flesh (cf. Acts 15: 8, 9), and this is what Paul declares in Titus 3: 4-7: "But when the kindness of God our Saviour, and his love toward man, appeared, 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, which he poured out upon us richly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

Peter quotes the very words of our lesson text for today, though apparently from the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament, and applies them to the gospel plan of salvation. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently: having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth. For All flesh is grass,

And all the glory thereof as the flower of grass.

The grass withereth, and the flower falleth:

But the word of the Lord abideth forever.

And this is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you."

### The Mission of the Evangelist (Isa. 40: 9-11)

*O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up on a high mountain;  
O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say*

*unto the cities of Judah, Behold, your God!*

The picture here is that of someone who was commissioned to tell the captive people of the restoration which was about to be theirs. This has been the role of Isaiah all through the portion of the prophecy which has to do with the liberation of the people in Babylon. The evangelist is charged with a great responsibility, and he should make use of every means which will add to the effectiveness of his proclamation. The people for whom the glad tidings were intended were intitled to know what message the Lord had for them, and it was for that reason that the messenger was to station himself where he could best be heard, and then speak to the people with all his might. The central portion of the good tidings was, *Behold, your God!* When people really know God and are willing to put their trust in him, then it matters not what others may think or do.

The lesson here for us is obvious. We have a great message to proclaim to all the world, and our work should be done with all the power and enthusiasm of our being. And just as it was with the messengers to captive Israel, our principal task is to call people's attention to God. "If God is for us, who is against us?" (Rom. 8: 31.) Someone has noted that present-day professed followers of Christ frequently fail to measure up to their potential, not because of a lack of zeal, but because they are in error regarding the proper emphasis and direction. "To put it quite bluntly, many earnest, religious people suffer themselves to be diverted and distracted from the chief end of religion—which must be nothing short of God himself. We do not mean for a moment that such people have given up their belief and turned materialists. It is rather that they have somehow lost touch with

the living Heart of all things. Religion does a great deal for them, but it fails to keep them in contact with the personal reality of God's love." If any average person will only take the time to make the comparison, he can easily see something of the difference we are talking about, as he reads the psalms of the Old Testament and our modern hymn or song books. Many of the modern hymn-writers think about their own inward condition and emotions, and express themselves accordingly; whereas, the Hebrew psalmist forgot himself as he looked away in adoration of the Most High God.

*Behold, the Lord Jehovah will come as a mighty one, and his arm will rule for him: Behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and will gently lead those that have their young.*

These verses tell something of the nature of God's dealings with his people. He would come as a mighty one to rescue his people from their bondage, and his reward and recompense would be with him. And then instead of goading his people along the way, as the soldiers of the captors did as they were being driven into the land of their bondage, Jehovah would deal with them after the most careful and tender manner. (Cf. Gen-33: 12-14.)

The Lord's purpose in coming to the earth was to rescue men from the bondage of sin, and he is amply able to overcome any enemy who may be holding those who desire salvation. "Who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love." (Col. 1: 13; cf. James 4: 7.) The tenderness with which God deals with his people is often in sharp contrast with the manner in which we act. (Cf. 2 Tim. 2: 24-26.)

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Under what circumstances did Isaiah predict the captivity of Judah?  
What general pattern was followed in this and the previous lesson?  
How are the captivity and restoration of Israel related to our time?

Why should lessons on these subjects be studied frequently?

### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of this text spoken?

Why do people become discouraged so often?

What is the best antidote to anxiety?

What does it mean to wait for Jehovah?

Why is it so easy for professed Christians

to put their minds on the things about them, rather than on the Lord? (Cf. James 1: 5-8.)  
 What does faith in God require on the part of the believer?  
 What are the results of waiting for Jehovah?

#### Comforting Promises and the Message of the Harbinger

What particular emphasis is given by Isaiah in his book, beginning with chapter 40?  
 How did Christ regard the Book of Isaiah?  
 What is necessary on our part, if we are to understand his prophecy?  
 What is the basic meaning of the term "comfort"?  
 What blessing always comes to those who are comforted by the Lord?  
 What lesson should preachers and public teachers, in particular, learn from this?  
 Upon what figure did Isaiah apparently base his remarks regarding the preparation of a highway in the wilderness?  
 What is its practical meaning?  
 In what way was the preparation accomplished?

#### The Eternal versus the Transient

When is it that people are best prepared for God to help them?  
 How would the Israelites themselves be prone to understand Isaiah's message to them?

What is the practical meaning, so far as we are concerned?  
 What is the principal difference between the time of Moses and that of Christ?  
 How do Paul and Peter interpret the teaching of the passage now before us?  
 Why is the gospel sufficient for all our spiritual needs?

#### The Mission of the Evangelist

What was the basis for Isaiah's remarks in this section of the lesson text?  
 Why should the bearer of good tidings make every effort to reach the people for whom his message is intended?  
 What is the central theme of the message of salvation?  
 Why is this true?  
 What is the lesson in all of this for us?  
 Why is it that many of us fail to measure up to our potential in this respect?  
 What should we do to remedy this situation?  
 What is one of the chief differences between the psalms of the Old Testament and many of our songs and hymns?  
 Discuss the manner in which God deals with his people.  
 Contrast his way with those of the world.  
 What application does this lesson have in the gospel age?  
 Why does God deal tenderly with those who are in distress?  
 What important lesson should we learn from this?

## Lesson VIII—February 23, 1964

# THE COMING MESSIAH

## Lesson Text

Isa. 42: 1-10

1 Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the Gen'-tiles.

2 He will not cry, nor lift up his voice, nor cause it to be heard in the street.

3 A bruised reed will he not break, and a dimly burning wick will he not quench: he will bring forth justice in truth.

4 He will not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set justice in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law.

5 Thus saith God Je-ho'-vah, he that created the heavens, and stretched them forth; he that spread abroad the earth and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:

6 I, Je-ho'-vah, have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thy hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gen'-tiles;

7 To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house.

8 I am Je-ho'-vah, that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise unto graven images.

9 Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them.

10 Sing unto Je-ho'-vah a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth; ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein, the isles, and the inhabitants thereof.

Golden Text.—"And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1: 33.)

Devotional Reading.—Isa. 42: 11-17.



## Daily Bible Readings

February 17.	M.....	Redemption First Predicted (Gen. 3: 14-16)
February 18.	T.....	Judah A Lawgiver (Gen. 49: 8-10)
February 19.	W.....	The Lord to Come from Judah (Heb. 7: 14-17)
February 20.	T.....	The Reign a Peaceful One (Isa. 11: 1-10)
February 21.	F.....	A Remarkable King (Matt. 21: 1 - 11 )
February 22.	S.....	The Throne in Heaven (Psalm 11: 4-7)
February 23.	S.....	Rejection by the People (Acts 4: 1-4, 23-31)

Time.—712 B.C.

Place.—Jerusalem.

Persons.—Isaiah and the people of Jehovah.

## Introduction

The term "Messiah" which occurs only twice in the New Testament (John 1: 41; 4: 25), and it is interpreted by John to mean *Christ*, or Anointed, according to the marginal reading of John 1: 41. Messiah is Hebrew, Christ is Greek, while Anointed is English. All three words mean one and the same thing, and the idea which they set forth was based upon the ancient Hebrew custom of anointing a person who was being set apart for high office, especially a prophet, priest, or king. The term "Anointed," referring to Jesus as the Christ, or Messiah, is frequently found in the Scriptures. Following the release of Peter and John from the custody of the Jewish rulers, the company of disciples which the apostles had joined lifted up their voices in prayer to God, and quoted the language of David in the Second Psalm:

Why did the Gentiles rage,  
And the peoples imagine vain things?  
The kings of the earth set themselves  
in array,  
And the rulers were gathered together,  
Against the Lord, and against his  
Anointed.

(Acts 4: 25, 26; cf. 10: 38; Heb. 1: 8, 9.)

Practically all pious Jews, especially from the exilic days and onward, were looking forward to the coming of the Messiah. When John the Baptist began his ministry, the multitudes went out to be baptized of him; "and as the people were in expectation, and all men reasoned in their hearts concerning John, whether haply he were the Christ." (Luke 3: 15.) The earliest prediction of the coming of Christ is found in Gen. 3: 15. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he

shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." This passage has been called the earliest statement of the gospel, and it predicted the conflict of the ages. Perhaps the prediction of the "coming One" which made the greatest impression upon the Israelites was the one which Moses gave. "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." (Deut. 18: 18, 19; cf. Acts 3: 22, 23; 7: 37.)

After the exile, and as the scribes and other leaders of the Jews continued to study their scriptures and the predictions of their prophets, and talked of the One who was to come, the people become more eager regarding him, and diligently considered every possibility that he might have arrived. "And this is the witness of John, when the Jews sent unto him from Jerusalem priests and Levites to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; and he confessed, I am not the Christ." (John 1: 19, 20.) Even the Samaritans were looking for the Messiah. "The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh (he that is called Christ): and when he is come, he will declare unto us all things." (John 4: 25.) Although every one was interested in the coming of the Messiah, it is a recorded fact that very few were able to recognize him when he did come. "And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elijah must first come? And he answered and said, Elijah indeed cometh, and shall restore all

things: but I say unto you, that Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but did unto him whatsoever

they would. Even so shall the Son of man also suffer of them." (Matt. 17: 10-12; cf. Acts 13: 27; 1 Cor. 2: 8.)

### The Golden Text

*'And, he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.'* The full statement of the context from which this passage is taken reads as follows: "And the angel said unto her, Fear, not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke 1: 30-33.) This statement must be understood in the light of the Old Testament predictions regarding the kingdom of David and the coming of Christ.

When Jacob told his sons what would befall them in the latter days, he said concerning Judah. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be. (Gen. 49: 10; cf. Num. 24: 17; Psalm 60: 7; 108: 8.) Jacob's prediction has a definite Messianic significance, and the tribe of Judah is declared to be the royal tribe. In later years the kingdom of Israel was given to David, a member of the tribe of Judah, and God's promise to him was that there would not fail to be one of his de-

scendants upon the throne. Cf. 1 Kings 2: 4; 11: 9-13.) Nineteen descendants of David, in direct line of succession, occupied the throne of David; but the time came when both the king and the people clearly demonstrated that they were no longer capable of maintaining a nation which was loyal to Jehovah, and it was for that reason that the Babylonian captivity became a practical necessity in order to preserve the line of David from utter extinction, and the people of Judah from irredeemable apostasy.

The last king in the line of David to occupy the throne before the captivity was Jehoiachin, also known as Jeconiah and Coniah. (See Jer. 22: 24-30.) Zedekiah was a descendant of David, but not in the line of the kings (2 Kings 24: 17.) The next person in the direct line of David to occupy the throne was the Christ, and the angel told Mary that he would reign for ever. (Cf. Acts 2: 29-32.) When the prophecy of Ezekiel (21: 25-27) is read in the light of Dan. 2, it will be seen that the probable meaning of the threefold overturning had reference to the overthrowing of one world empire after another, until the time arrived for the establishment of the kingdom which would 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. (Cf. Acts 2: 36.)

### The Text Explained

#### The Servant of the Lord and His Mission to the World

(Isa. 42: 1-4)

*Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. He will not cry, nor lift up his voice, nor cause it to be heard in the street. A bruised reed will he not break, and a dimly burning wick will he not quench: he will bring forth justice in truth. He will not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set justice in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law.*

These words are quoted and ap-

plied to Jesus by Matthew, after he had healed a man's withered hand on the sabbath day. The Pharisees had asked him if it was lawful to heal on the sabbath day, that they might accuse him. After the healing, the Pharisees went out, took counsel against him. how they might destroy him. "And Jesus perceiving it withdrew from thence: and many followed him; and he healed them all, and charged them that they should not make him known: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying, Behold, my servant whom I have chosen;

My Beloved in whom my soul is well pleased:

I will put my Spirit upon him,  
And he shall declare judgment to the Gentiles.

He shall not strive, nor cry aloud;  
Neither shall any one hear his voice in the streets.

A bruised reed shall he not break,  
And smoking flax shall he not quench,

Till he send forth judgment unto victory.

And in his name shall the Gentiles hope.

(Matt. 12: 15-21.)

Jesus is called a "servant," rather than a son, because of the station which he accepted (Phil. 2: 7) and obedience which he rendered (Heb. 10: 9.) The fact that God was well pleased with him shows that his earthly life was lived in complete harmony with the will of Jehovah. This is significant, and we should carefully study that which he did, and the manner in which he did it. Jesus, while he lived here among men, was subject to the Spirit, and was enabled by him to do his work. (See Mark 1: 12; Acts 10: 38; Luke 4: 14-21.) The term "judgment," as used here, evidently refers to God's commandments or laws (cf. Psalm 19: 9; 119: 30, King James Version), and its practical meaning here is that Christ would make known to the Gentiles the whole system of divine truth. (Cf. Mark 3: 7, 8; 16: 15.)

As Jesus went about his work of teaching and administering to the needs of the people, he never sought publicity nor popularity. Instead of his voice being heard in the streets, it was more often heard on the mountain top. He did not quarrel with the Pharisees, but "withdrew from thence," and sought to be helpful to the people in distress. The sympathy of Christ is seen in the fact that he would not oppress the feeble and poor, but instead will fan their dying energies and resolutions into a flame, until the gospel has gone forth to all people. And while dealing gently with the distressed of the earth, he himself "will not fail nor be discouraged," that is, he himself would not burn dimly nor be bruised (see marginal reading), until he finished his work among men. (Cf. John 4: 31-34; 2 Tim. 2: 24-26.)

The Success of the Servant Divinely Assured

(Isa. 42: 5-9)

*Thus saith God Jehovah, he that created the heavens, and stretched them forth; he that spread abroad the earth and that which cometh out out it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: I, Jehovah, have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thy hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house.*

In the previous lesson, attention was called to the fact that God is the center of our very being, and that everything depends upon him; and here God identifies himself. If people would keep their minds on God, then many of the problems which loom great and staggering on their horizon would fade into the insignificant. This is precisely the lesson which Job had to learn, and there is no better commentary on this portion of our lesson text than that which God revealed to Job about the Almighty. (Read Job, chapters 38-41.) It would be utterly impossible for anyone today to give an accurate description of Job's mental anguish during the days of his suffering. In all his trials he never doubted his own integrity, nor swerved from his firm belief in the reality of God and his ultimate justice. (Cf. Job 13: 15.) At times he was bewildered, confounded, and terrified, and at times seemed to question the providence of God in his life. (Cf. Job 19: 7-12; 23: 1-9.) This attitude caused Job to ask many difficult questions, for example, Why, being innocent and upright, had so great a calamity befallen him? Why, if he must thus suffer, was he not permitted to die? Why does Jehovah permit the righteous to suffer and the unrighteous to prosper?

Jehovah answered all these questions, but it is a singular fact that in answering them no direct reference was made to Job's questions. Instead, the Lord's answer is found in a series of questions which he addressed to Job — questions which humbled the man of Uz and reminded him of the majesty and omnipotence of the Almighty. (Job 38: 1ff.)

In the midst of Jehovah's questions, which belong to the natural realm, he asked Job, "Wilt thou even annul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be justified?" (Job 40: 8.) If Job knew so little about the ways of God in nature, why then should he question the Lord's way in his providential dealings with him? The Lord's questions humbled Job and brought him to repentance. He did not, of course, repent of the sins which his erstwhile friends had rashly charged him with, for he was not guilty of them; but he did repent of his questioning the ways of God in his life. (Job 40: 3-5; 42: 1-6.) If we can learn to put our trust in God as Job did, and, of course, as Jesus did while he was here among men, fulfilling the divine mission which was his, as set forth in the text now before us, then we will have one of the greatest blessings which can come to us. (Eph. 3: 20, 21; 2 Cor. 9: 8.)

The mission of Christ is clearly set forth in verses 6, 7 of the section of the lesson text now before us. The righteousness referred to is that of God himself—his own dependable purpose. (Cf. 2 Tim. 2: 13.) Adam Clarke thinks that the term "covenant" (*berith*, in the Hebrew) should be rendered *covenant sacrifice*, while A Hebrew and English Lexicon, by Brown, Driver, and Briggs, calls it *the prophetic covenant*, that is, the 'divine promise to establish a new constitution, with new institutions and precepts. (Cf. Isa. 55: 3; Jer. 31: 31-34.) The meaning to us is, of course, that God would make this new covenant with his people through Christ. (Cf. Heb. 8: 8-13.) The blessings of this new covenant include both Jews and Gentiles, and through it the spiritually blind may receive their sight, and those in the shackles of sin may enjoy freedom from its tyranny.

*I am Jehovah, that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise unto graven images. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them.*

The term "Jehovah," as used in the text, is the personal name of the God of the Bible; and it was the most holy and the most significant of all the terms which designated Deity,

so far as the Israelites were concerned. Originally the term was made up entirely of consonants, variously written, without vowel points, IHVH, JHVH, JHWH, YHVH, YHWH, and known as the tetragrammaton (see Webster's Dictionary), that is, the four consonants which formed the Hebrew "incommunicable name" of the Supreme Being. The true pronunciation was lost; and it was not until 1520, the time of the Reformation, that the modern pronunciation came into use.

Inasmuch as the Jews considered it unlawful to pronounce the personal name of God when reading the Hebrew Scriptures, the term *Adonai* was substituted for it, except when the term IHVH (or whatever the spelling was) preceded or followed *Adonai* in the text, in which case the name *Elohim* was read in its stead. In the course of the time the vowels of *Adonai* or *Elohim* were combined with the four consonants, already referred to, to form *Yehovah*, or, according to a later system of transliteration, *Jehovah*. This form, with an anglicized pronunciation, enters into the English Bible, particularly the American Standard Version, and has come into general use as the proper or personal name of the God of the Holy Scriptures. The expression "Yahweh" is often used instead of *Jehovah*, due to the contention of some modern scholars that it comes nearer to being the original pronunciation of the four consonants referred to above.

Jehovah is the Supreme God of the universe, and he will not share his glory with any would-be rival. Throughout the Bible, *Jehovah* describes himself as a jealous God; and that means that he will not share the loyalty of his people with any rival whatsoever. God wants his people to have complete confidence in him ("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 is a rewarder of them that seek after him," Heb. 11: 6), and he points out the fact that his former predictions were fulfilled, as a motive for this attitude toward him; and if what was predicted came to pass, then certainly they can trust him for the fulfillment of the predictions which pertained to the future. The last

clause of verse 9 evidently refers to the coming of Christ. Fausset notes that "before there is *the slightest indications* to enable a sagacious observer to infer the coming event, God *foretells* it." Thus, not only does Jehovah want his people to have confidence in him; he gives them ample ground for such trust.

### Praise to Jehovah for His Mighty Deliverance

(Isa. 42: 10)

*Sing unto Jehovah a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth; ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein, the isles, and the inhabitants thereof.*

The "new things" of verse 9 demand a new song, "such as has never before been sung, called for by a new manifestation of God's grace, to express which no hymn for former mercies would be appropriate." (Fausset.) This new song would be sung when the Lord began his reign in Jerusalem, as predicted by the prophet in Isa. 2: 2-4. The remark regarding those that go down to the sea, and the inhabitants of the islands of the great expanse, probably has reference to the means of carrying the gospel message throughout the world. Saved people who really appreciate their situation are happy people; and what greater privilege could come to them than the opportunity to express their feeling to God in song? (Cf. Ex. 15: 1; Acts 8: 39.)

### Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

#### Introduction

What is the meaning of the term "Messiah"?

How did the Jewish people in general feel about the coming of the Messiah?

What was the basis of their hope for his coming?

Why didn't more of the people recognize him when he did come?

#### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of this text spoken?

In what light must it be understood? Give reasons for your answer.

Why was his kingdom to be an everlasting kingdom?

How did he fit into the line of the family of David?

What proof do we have that he is indeed on David's throne?

#### The Servant of the Lord and His Mission to the World

What use did Matthew make of the words

The man who said, "Give me the making of the nation's songs, and I care not who makes its laws." was speaking from a true sight into human nature; for singing lies closer to the center of life, than many of us think. God's people today have fewer greater heritages, than the privilege of singing praises unto him. No great religious movement ever succeeds in the absence of gospel singing. The disposition to abound in the divine exercise of singing praises, not only in the appointed meetings of the saints, but also when Christians occasionally meet together in each other's houses, as some one has observed, is a contribution to growth and development, the value of which is readily recognized by any thoughtful observer. Private singing, in fact, as one has the opportunity, has a great tendency to enliven, animate, and rejoice the soul of a child of God, and aid him in his effort to propagate vital religion. The place and power of song in the life of a Christian may be learned from such scriptures as the following: 1 Cor. 14: 15; Eph. 5: 18, 19; Col. 3: 16; James 5: 13.

Longfellow wrote,  
God sent his Singers upon the earth  
With songs of sadness and of mirth,  
That they might touch the hearts of men,  
And bring them back to heaven again.

—The Singers.

which were spoken by Isaiah in the text now before us?

Why was Jesus called a "servant" rather than a son?

What was meant by God's putting his Spirit upon him?

In what sense did he declare judgment to the Gentiles?

What was meant by saying that he would not strive, nor cry aloud; neither should any one hear his voice in the street?

What was his attitude toward the weak?

In what sense would he not fail nor be discouraged?

#### The Success of the Servant Divinely Assured

Why did God identify himself as he did in this section of the lesson text?

Why is it so important that we keep our minds fixed on Jehovah?

What experience did Job have in this respect?

Why did Jehovah reveal himself to Job as he did?

Why is the record concerning Job such a splendid commentary on the text now before us?

How did Jehovah go about teaching Job?  
 What was the mission of Christ, as set forth in the text?  
 In what sense did Jehovah call him in righteousness?  
 How was the Messiah given for a covenant of the people?  
 For whom is the new covenant intended?  
 How does Jesus restore sight to the blind and release the prisoners?  
 What did God say about his name?  
 Discuss the meaning of the term "Jehovah."  
 How does he regard all rivals to his glory?

In what way did he encourage the people to trust him?

#### Praise to Jehovah for His Mighty Deliverance

Why were the people exhorted to sing a "new song"?  
 When was this song to be sung?  
 Why do saved people sing praises to God?  
 Discuss the place and power of song in the life of God's people.  
 Under what circumstances should the Lord's people sing?  
 Why is private singing effectual for the Christian?

### Lesson IX—March 1, 1964

## THE SUFFERING SAVIOUR

### Lesson Text

Isa. 53: 1-12

1 Who hath believed our message? and to whom hath the arm of Je-ho'-vah been revealed?

2 For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

3 He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not.

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way; and Je-ho'-vah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who *among them* considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke *was due*?

9 And they made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death; although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

10 Yet it pleased Je-ho'-vah to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Je-ho'-vah shall prosper in his hand.

11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by the knowledge of himself shall my righteous servant justify many; and he shall bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors: yet he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

**Golden Text.**—"I gave my back to the smiters. and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair." (Isa. 50: 6.)

**DEVOTIONAL READING.**—Isa. 50: 1-11.

### Daily Bible Readings

February 24.	M.	Significance of Christ's Suffering (Rom. 5: 6-11)
February 25.	T.	Partakers of Christ's Sufferings (1 Pet. 4: 12-19)
February 26.	W.	Christ Suffers When We Do (Acts 22: 1-8)
February 27.	T.	Suffering Uncomplainingly (Matt. 27: 12-14)

February 28. F..... Prophecy of His Suffering (Acts 8: 32-34)  
 February 29. S..... Suffering Servant Honored (Rev. 5: 9-14)  
 March 1. S..... Atonement by Means of Death (Heb. 9: 11-28)

Time.—712 B.C.

Place.—Jerusalem.

Persons.—Isaiah and the people of the Lord.

## Introduction

The fifty-third chapter is one of the best known portions of the Book of Isaiah. Practically anyone who reads the Bible at all is acquainted, at least to some extent, with this wonderful passage. When Philip the evangelist, in obedience to the voice of an angel of the Lord, went to the way which went down from Jerusalem to Gaza, he saw a man riding along the road in a chariot, who was reading Isaiah the prophet. "And the Spirit said *unto* Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran to him, and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some one shall guide me? And he besought Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of the scripture which he was reading was this,

He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;

And as a lamb before his shearer is dumb,

So he openeth not his mouth:

In his humiliation his judgment was taken away:

His generation who shall declare?

For his life is taken from the earth?

And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speak-

eth the prophet this? of himself, or of some other? And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this scripture, preached unto him Jesus." (See Acts 8: 26-35.)

There is hardly a verse in the entire fifty-third chapter of Isaiah in which one might not very well begin, as Philip did, and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, and him crucified. It was in the counsels of God from the beginning (cf. Gen. 3: 15; Eph. 1: 9, 10; 2: 15, 16) that his Son should suffer on our behalf all the many afflictions which we deserved to suffer. The various affliction which he endured for us are detailed, one by one, in the chapter which we are to study at this time. All of this suffering was made necessary because of sin; and it is only because the Lord was willing to die for sin that we have the hope of salvation. "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him." (2 Corinthians 5: 21.)

There was One who was willing to die in my stead,

That a soul so unworthy might live;

And the path to the cross he was willing to tread,

All the sins of my life to forgive.

—Mrs. Frank A. Breck.

## The Golden Text

*"7 gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair "* This passage is taken from a section of Isaiah which fore-

tells the terrible ignominy and suffering which Jesus would undergo in making possible the salvation of the human race. The entire verse from which the golden text is taken reads as follows: "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting." The expressions "I gave" and "I hid not" imply that Jesus voluntarily subjected himself to the torture and humiliation which were heaped upon him. The kind of treatment which is

described in the passage now under consideration was common in the East. In commenting on the manner in which Christ was dealt with, Farrar says,

"In civilized nations all is done that can be done to spare every needless suffering to a man condemned to death; but among the Romans insult and derision were the customary preliminaries to the last agony. The "*et pereuntibus addita ludibria*" [*"even to the dying abuse is added"*] of Tacitus might stand for their general practice. Such a custom furnished a specimen of that lowest form of human wickedness which delights to inflict pain, which feels an inhu-

man pleasure in gloating over the agonies of another, even when he has done no wrong. The mere spectacle of agony is agreeable to the degraded soul. The vile soldiery of the Praetorium—not Romans, who might have had more sense of the inborn dignity of the silent sufferer, but mostly the mercenary scum and dregs of the provinces—led him into the barrackroom, and there mocked, in their savage hatred, the King whom they had tortured. It added keenness to their enjoyment to have in their power one who was of Jewish birth, of innocent life, of majestic bearing. The opportunity broke so agreeably the coarse monotony of their life, that they summoned all the cohort who were disengaged to witness their brutal sport. . . . "The Life of Christ, p. 51 If.)

To remove the beard from the face of a man was considered a sign of reproach (cf. 2 Sam. 10: 4), but when that was done by *plucking off the hair*, the process was both shameful and painful. Something of the terrible suffering which the smiting of the back resulted in may be imagined from the description which David Smith gives of that type of punish-

ment. "The Romans were wont to scourge a criminal ere they crucified him. The scourge was a frightful instrument—a whip with several thongs, each loaded with a corn-shaped balls of lead or sharp pieces of bones. Six lictors took the victim, stripped him, bound him to a post, and plied the cruel lash. Each stroke cut into the quivering flesh; the veins and sometimes the very entrails were laid bare, and often the teeth and eyes were knocked out. It is no wonder that not infrequently the sufferer expired under the torture. The soldiers led Jesus away and scourged him; and then they took him, faint and bleeding, and compassed him with ribald mockery. Over his lacerated back they put Herod's purple robe; they plaited a crown of thorns and put it on his head; and in his right hand, by way of sceptre, they put a reed; then in mock homage they knelt before him and saluted him: 'Hail! King of the Jews. And they spat upon his face, buffeted him, and, snatching the reed from his hand, smote him on the head, at each stroke driving the thorns into his tortured brow.'" (The Days of His Flesh, p. 486f.)

## The Text Explained

### A Man of Sorrows

(Isa. 53: 1-3)

*Who hath believed our message? and to whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed?* Isaiah was speaking of the time when the Messiah would come to the earth, and when he asks, *Who hath believed our message?* the reference was to the message of the prophets, including in all probability that of John the Baptist. *The arm of Jehovah was revealed* in the "mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know" (Acts 2: 22); but not withstanding all of that, the people to whom the Lord came, as a general rule, rejected practically everything which he said and did. That seems incredible to us; but when we think of the many thousands today, both in the church and out of it, who do not believe that which the Bible says about Christ and his work, it becomes more understandable.

*For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of*

*dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.* The Messiah's growing up as a tender plant is, in the opinion of Matthew Henry, an implication that he grew "silently and insensibly, and without any noise. . . . Christ rose as a tender plant, which one would have thought, might easily have been crushed." The growing of a shoot or branch from a root in the dry ground suggests the idea that it comes from that which is apparently dead. It had been hundreds of years since a son of David had sat upon the throne of Israel, and, for all practical purposes, so far as men were concerned, the house of that patriarch was dead, or at least in a greatly decayed state. But God had long ago promised that he would raise up one to sit on the throne, and his promise never fails. (Cf. Acts 2: 29-31; 2 Pet. 3: 8.)

The fact that Jesus possessed no physical attractions, such as people usually desire in their heroes and leaders, was a great stumblingblock



to the Jews. They expected that there would be some uncommon beauty in the face and person of the incarnate Deity, which would charm the eye, attract the heart, and raise the expectations of all who should see him. The lack of all these physical attractions was probably providentially designed, because of the weakness of the human race in adoring such features; and the same principle probably accounts for the lack of worldly grandeur with reference to the church and the worship which God has ordained for his people. (Cf. 1 Cor. 1: 26ff.)

*He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not.* The term "despise" carries with it the idea of belittling, looking down upon, disregarding, or holding in contempt; and the reason why the people felt that way about Jesus was the result of their disappointment in him. However, the question which should concern us today is that we don't fall into the same mistake. There are many ways in which people can despise and reject Christ, as, for example, (1) by yielding to the fear of unpopularity, along with the desire to have the praise of men, John 12: 42, 43; (2) by refusing to accept the word of Christ, John 12: 48-50; (3) by refusing to suffer with Christ, Rom. 8: 17; and (4) by a failure to relieve the needs of others, Matt. 25: 31-46.

The expression "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" has become a classic phrase with us, and no one can read the life of Christ, as set forth by the gospel narrators of the New Testament, without realizing something of the truthfulness of the statement. Jesus was primarily a man of sorrows, in order that he might save us from our sins; and no man who rightly considers this fact can remain indifferent toward him. Christ came to bless men, help them in their helpless condition; and yet they hide their face from him, and esteem him not. How great must be the love of the Lord for sinful men!

#### His Vicarious Sufferings

(Isa. 53: 4-9)

*Surely he hath borne our griefs,  
and carried our sorrows; yet we did*

*esteem him stricken, smitten of God. and afflicted.* The Messiah whom men despised and rejected has borne for them that which they could not have carried alone. He was himself brought to sorrow, suffering, and shame, and was condemned as a malefactor; all because he chose to carry the load which man should have carried, but couldn't. And yet man, for whom he was suffering so much, thought that God was punishing him for his own sins!

*But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.* Here is a vivid picture of the suffering Messiah, and the embodiment of the principle of the innocent suffering for the guilty. Some who read this record are moved to ask why God should punish the righteous for the sinner; but that is a part of the constitution of our world. We see it happening every day. The innocent must suffer for the guilty, not through any fault of their own, but simply from the circumstances in which they are necessarily placed. For example, a godly mother suffers for a vicious son; an upright man must suffer for the wickedness of those who are nearest to him; and inasmuch as Christ put himself in our place, he was made to suffer, "the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God." (1 Pet. 3: 18; read also 1 Pet. 2: 21-25.)

*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.* This is a continuation of the description of the vicarious suffering of the Messiah; and, in the words of A. R. Fausset, "the innocent was punished as if guilty, that the guilty might be rewarded as if innocent." This truth could not have been spoken of a mere martyr. The going astray like sheep, and every one turning to his own way, implies the apostasy of men, both as a race, and as individuals. (Cf. Rom. 3: 10, 23.)

*He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.* The verb from which we have "oppressed" literally means to have

the payment of a debt sternly exacted, and then to oppress in general. The idea here probably is that in his sufferings, the full penalty of our sins was exacted. And yet in all the suffering and humiliation of Jesus, he, like the helpless lamb and sheep, opened not his mouth. (Read again

1 Pet. 2: 21-23.) How different it is with us! At the slightest provocation, we are often wont to heap abuse upon those who oppose us. May God have mercy upon us!

*By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who among them considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due?* The reference here was evidently to his trial and condemnation. He offered no resistance; and although his judges declared him innocent, yet that judgment was set aside, and through oppression the Lord Jesus was executed as a common criminal. He had no sin for which he should have suffered; his entire affliction was for others; and yet few, if any, realized that his death was a vicarious one. The majority of his contemporaries considered him to be a sinner, and thought that he was dying for his own wrongdoings. (Cf. Acts 2: 23, 36; 2 Cor. 5: 21.)

*And they made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death; although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.* The idea here seems to be that by crucifying Jesus with the two malefactors, they appointed or intended that his grave should be with the wicked; but, instead of that, it was with the rich man, Joseph of Arimathea. There was, of course, absolutely no reason why his enemies should determine to place Jesus among the wicked; for he had done nothing to warrant such treatment. But, as Peter says he "committed himself to him that judgeth righteously;" and that is the lesson which we should learn and put into practice ourselves. Those who may oppose us for some reason often try to consign us to an undesirable place; but, as is so often the case, "Man proposes, but God disposes." Peter stated the matter in this way: "For this is acceptable, if for conscience toward God a man endure griefs, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if,

when ye sin, and are buffeted for it, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." (1 Pet. 2: 19, 20; cf. Rom. 8: 28.) Yes, it doesn't matter where men try to put us; if we do right we know that God can and will take care of any situation which may come upon us.

### The Reward of His Sacrifice

(Isa. 53: 10-12)

*Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand.* It was determined in the eternal counsels of heaven that Christ should die for the sins of the world (read the first three chapters of Ephesians). God is the Sovereign whose law had been broken and whose honor must be upheld; and, looking at the question from that point of view, Jehovah used Jesus for the purpose of satisfying the demands of justice, although the Bible plainly teaches that the action of Christ is giving his life for the sins of the world was voluntary (cf. John 10: 17, 18). We should not try to fathom the depths of divine wisdom, but accept the fact that the sacrifice was made, and that we now have the opportunity of being saved through the blood of Christ (Tit. 2: 13, 14).

The "seed" which Jesus saw was evidently his spiritual posterity, or those who would be converted to his cause; while the *prolonging of his days* apparently has reference to his life after his resurrection. Or, to state the same thing in another way, Although it was necessary for him to make the supreme sacrifice for sin, yet he would be raised from the dead and his life would be prolonged or continued. In saying that *the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand*, Isaiah probably had reference to the continuous work of redemption, or what we now know as the mediatorial reign of Christ. Jehovah is always pleased when men are saved from their sins and seek to do his will; and inasmuch as Jesus works through his followers today, it should be the delight of every Christian to have part in the "pleasure of

Jehovah." (Cf. 1 Thess. 2: 17-20; James 5: 19, 20.)

*He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by the knowledge of himself shall my righteous servant justify many, and he shall bear their iniquities.* The probable meaning of seeing "the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" is that Jesus would see the fruits resulting from his sacrifice, and that would amply "repay" him for all the suffering which he endured (cf. Heb. 12: 2), or possibly that Jehovah would be satisfied with the atonement. The "knowledge" of Christ results in the salvation of all who learn of him and do his will (John 6: 44, 45; Rom. 1: 16, 17.) Jesus, as the sinner's substitute, bears the iniquities of all who will accept his offer of mercy.

*Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors: yet he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.* The figure used in this verse is apparently based on the practice of army leaders who, when they had driven the enemy out of the field or had utterly defeated him, took the spoil of battle for themselves and their army. Such action was unquestionable evidence of victory, and a recompense for all the toils and perils of battle. (Cf. Col. 2: 15.) The fact that Christ "poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors," gives the reason for the signal honor which God bestowed upon him. There was no sacrifice too great for Christ to make and no humiliation too shameful for him to endure; so, there is no reward too great for him to receive. (See Phil. 2: 5-11.) The redemptive work of Christ began with his suffering and death, and is being continued in heaven. (Cf. Heb. 7: 25; 9: 24.) Adam Clarke notes that "in this

chapter the incarnation, preaching, humiliation, rejection, sufferings, death, atonement, resurrection, and mediation of Jesus Christ are all predicted, together with the prevalence of his gospel, and the extension of his kingdom through all ages."

Although not a believer in Jesus in the true sense of the word, Ernest Renan, the French religious historian and Semitic philologist, paid the following tribute to him. "But whatever may be the surprises of the future, Jesus will never be surpassed. His worship will grow young without ceasing; this legend will call forth tears without end; his sufferings will melt the noblest hearts; all ages will proclaim that among the sons of men there is none born greater than Jesus.

"Repose now in thy glory, noble Founder, thy work is finished; thy divinity is established. Fear no more to see the edifice of thy labors fall by any fault. Henceforth, beyond the reach of frailty, thou shalt witness from the heights of divine peace the infinite results of thy acts. At the price of a few hours of suffering, which did not even reach thy grand soul, thou hast bought the most complete immortality. For thousands of years the world will depend on thee. Banner of our contests, thou shalt be the standard about which the hottest battle will be given. A thousand times more alive, a thousand times more beloved, since thy death than during thy passage here below, thou shalt become the cornerstone of humanity so entirely that to tear thy name from this world would be to rend it to its foundations. Between thee and God there will no longer be any distinction. Complete conqueror of death, take possession of thy kingdom, whither shalt thou follow thee, by the royal road which thou hast traced, ages of worshippers." (Life of Jesus.)

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Why is the chapter from which this lesson is taken such a well known passage?

In what way did it serve a New Testament preacher?

What way is the chapter related to the great scheme of human redemption?

### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of this text spoken?

What do we learn from the passage regarding the attitude of Jesus?

Why did the Romans of Christ's day deal so cruelly with people who were condemned to die?

Describe the scourging of a prisoner.

What was implied in "plucking off the hair"?

## A Man of Sorrows

Of what message was Isaiah speaking and why wasn't it believed?

In what way was the arm of Jehovah revealed?

Why do so few people today, relatively speaking, believe that which the Bible says about Jesus and his work? Give reasons for your answer.

In what sense did Jesus grow up as a tender plant?

Why say "as a root out of dry ground"?

What impression did his physical appearance make on the people?

What probable lesson do we learn from this relative to the church and its work?

In what sense did the people of his day despise Christ?

Show that it is possible for one today to do the same thing.

Why was Jesus "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"?

## His Vicarious Sufferings

Why did the people of the time of Christ fail to recognize his vicarious sufferings?

Why is it necessary for the innocent to suffer for the guilty?

What was the Lord's attitude toward his sufferings?

Why are we so different in this respect?

What "judgment" was taken away from the Lord?

What did the majority of the people think about the suffering of Jesus?

In what sense did they make his grave with the wicked?

What change did Jehovah make in that respect?

What does Peter say regarding the attitude of Christ during his suffering?

What lesson should we learn from this?

## The Reward of His Sacrifice

Why did it please Jehovah to bruise Jesus?

What "seed" did he see?

In what way were his days prolonged?

What is "the pleasure of Jehovah" and how does it prosper in the hand of Jesus?

Upon what basis are people justified by the knowledge of Christ?

What is Jehovah's attitude toward Jesus because of his great sacrifice?

In what way is the work of Christ continued in heaven?

Give a summary of the contents of the chapter upon which our lesson for today is based.

## Lesson X—March 8, 1964

## CHRIST'S GRACIOUS INVITATION

## Lesson Text

Isa. 55: 1-13

1 Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

2 Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

3 Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

4 Behold, I have given him for a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander to the peoples.

5 Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not; and a nation that knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of Je-ho'-vah thy God, and for the Holy One of Is'-ra-el; for he hath glorified thee.

6 Seek ye Je-ho'-vah while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near:

7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his

thoughts; and let him return unto Je-ho'-vah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Je-ho'-vah.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

10 For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, and giveth seed to the sower and bread to the eater;

11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

12 For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing; and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

13 Instead oi' the thorn shall come up the fir-tree; and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle-tree:

and it shall be to Je-ho'-vah for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"He that will, let him take the water of life freely."* (Rev. 22: 17.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Isa. 56: 1-5.

## Daily Bible Readings

March 2. M.....	The Mercies of David (Isa. 55: 1-3)
March 3. T.....	Mercy Through Christ (1 Pet. 2: 1-10)
March 4. W.....	God Abounds in Mercy (Eph. 2: 1-10)
March 5. T.....	Invitation to All (Matt. 11: 28-30)
March 6. F.....	Whosoever will May Come (Rev. 22: 16-20)
March 7. S.....	Insulting to Reject Invitation (Matt. 22: 1-14)
March 8. S.....	Blessings Beyond Comprehension (1 John 3: 1-4)

TIME.—712 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Isaiah and the people of the Lord.

## Introduction

If one should endeavor to list all the invitations which are mentioned in the Bible, he would soon learn that a large portion of the Sacred Scriptures is devoted to that subject in one way or another. Someone has suggested that if the word "come" should be removed from the teaching of Jesus, the pages of the gospel would be pauperized. The disciples, for example, would no longer leave their nets and follow Jesus; and people in general would not have understood the tender and loving heart of the Master. But as it is, as we read the New Testament records of the life of our Lord, we hear him on every side saying to this man and that one, and to this group and that one, "Come unto me." Even the little children were not afraid, when he called them to him and took them up and blessed them.

An invitation, if sincerely extended, always indicates an interest on the part of the one extending it in the one to whom it is addressed. This is especially true of the invitations of the Bible. An invitation, of course, implies a separation between the Parties involved, or that the one does not have that which the other is inviting him to accept. We know that when man is invited to partake of the salvation which has been provided for him, there is a separation between him and the Lord. (Cf. Isa. 59: 1, 2; Matt. 11: 28; Eph. 2: 1.)

And, too the invitation which the Lord extends is always born of love (John 3: 16). God does not want anyone to be lost (Ezek. 33: 11; 1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9); and man, in and of himself, is wholly unable to obtain the salvation which he so sorely needs (Eph. 2: 11, 12).

The particular invitation which we are to study today had its setting with the exiled Israelites, but it is by no means limited to them. The Babylonian captivity made a deep impression on them, and, in many ways, changed their habits of living. The city of Babylon was one of the great trade centers of the world, and it was there that many of the children of Israel formed the mercantile habits, and developed the financial genius which proved to be both a blessing and a curse to them in their subsequent years. Some of the people who were held there lost their desire to return to their homeland, and did not go when the others did; but there were some who never allowed anything to supplant the love of Jerusalem and the temple worship in their hearts. They were always conscious of those great spiritual realities which money could not buy. And it was to such people that the message of Isaiah was addressed, along with those of all nations who were invited to partake of the wider and more enduring salvation which the Messiah made possible for them.

## The Golden Text

*"He that will, let him take the water of life freely."* If people could

be brought to realize just how much the Lord loves the people of the

earth, they would immediately accept his offer to bless them. Behold the father as he earnestly watches for the return of the prodigal son! And what preparations were made to welcome him home and to restore him to his place again! That is but a picture of the heavenly Father who wants all of his children to come back to him, live for and with him, both here and in that world which is to come. And not only does God want his people to return to him; he has made every possible sacrifice and preparation for them to do just that. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3: 16; cf. Rom. 5: 6-8.)

The full context of the golden text reads as follows: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely." In commenting on this invitation, the editor of *The Great Texts of the Bible* says, "The last verses of this book of Scripture are like the final movement of some concerto, in which we hear all the instruments of the orchestra swelling the flood of triumph. In them many voices are audible alternately. Sometimes it is the Seer who speaks, sometimes an angel, sometimes a deeper voice from the Throne, that of Christ himself. It is often difficult, therefore, amidst these swift transitions, to tell who is the speaker; but this much is clear, that, just before the verse from which the text is taken, our Lord has been proclaiming from the Throne his royalty and swift coming to render to every man ac-

cording to his work, and to gather his own into the heavenly city. After that solemn utterance he is silent for a moment, and there is a great hush. Then our Lord's declaration is met by a response from the Spirit and the church. The Spirit and the bride reply, 'Come.' The call is also to be taken up by every hearer. Each one is to say, 'Come.' Then, in answer to the cry of the Spirit, of the church, and of the faithful, begging him to come, our Lord speaks again, this time to all the yearning and weary souls among mankind: 'He that is athirst, let him come: he that will [that desires to have Jesus], let him take the water of life freely.'"

There may be some question as to the object of the first two "Comes" of the verse now before us, but there is apparently no violence done to the Scriptures when we stress the view that the Spirit, the church, and all others are joining in the urgent call for all men to accept the glorious salvation which has been provided for them. We know that the great work of the Spirit is to bring to fulfillment in human experience the total meaning of Jesus Christ as God's Son and the Redeemer of the world; and we are also told that the church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3: 15), which would certainly include the calling of men to the great feast of salvation. At any rate, we know that this is the last great invitation of the Scriptures to accept the salvation to which God has been calling men, since the fall in the garden of Eden. This should make a tremendous impression upon the mind and heart of every thoughtful person.

## The Text Explained

### God's Free Offer of Salvation to All

(Isa. 55: 1-5)

*Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.*

The background against which Isa-

iah's message was spoken was the Babylonian captivity, and this great invitation should, first of all, be understood in that light. It appears quite evident that many of the people of Israel in their captive country had become absorbed in their business activities and their new way of life, and were not especially interested in the religious hopes of the more pious of their brethren. But there were also many there who were not satisfied, that is, those who were conscious of their need for the things

which God alone can give. The terms waters, bread, milk, and wine were symbols of life with God. They were not mere luxuries, but were absolutely essential to life itself. Furthermore, these necessary items had to be purchased, and anyone who was unable to buy them would be in great distress.

But Isaiah comes to the people with a message of great hope, namely, they may now have everything which is essential to salvation "without money and without price." This is but a picture of the wonderful blessings which Christ came to make possible for the human race. And if they are essential, then why do people spend their "money" for that which is not necessary, and that which does not satisfy. The three great needs of mankind are (1) propitiation, (2) pardon, and (3) purity, and that is the very picture which Isaiah presents in our last lesson and in this one. The *propitiation* is set forth in chapter 53, that is, the putting of one in the place of others, the sinless for the sinful, and making him "to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him." (See 2 Cor. 5: 21.) The term "propitiate" literally means to appease or render favorable, or, to state the same thing in another way, to propitiate the offended is to do something which will gain the good will of the offended. Man's sin brought about the need for a propitiation. (See Rom. 3: 21-26.) The way to pardon and purity is set forth in this chapter, and will be pointed out further on.

The section of the lesson text which we are now considering sets forth that which has been called "the poor man's market." In the words of another, "we have here a plain market, even the most pleasant, most substantial, and most glorious market that ever was." And, then, the editor of *The Great Texts of the Bible* goes on to say that indeed, when you come to think of it, we have here the strangest kind of market which one can conceive, in which every maxim of the merchantman is set aside; in which the only payment is made by the seller, and all the gain is to the buyers, and in which goods, the most precious, the most costly you can think of, are given away for naught. (Cf. Eph. 2: 8-10.)

*Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not; and a nation that knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of Jehovah thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.*

When people are willing to listen to Jehovah, and do his will, the blessings which he will bestow upon them are unlimited. In the instance now before us, the reference is to the coming of the Messiah and his kingdom. That is what is meant by the everlasting covenant and the sure mercies of David. This, of course, involved the religious, rather than the political, leadership of David. The church may very properly be called a messianic community, and her function is to bear witness to the truth, rather than to attempt coercion. Not even the Lord himself tries to force anyone to yield his life to him. And when it comes to the work of his people in evangelizing the world, there is no weapon which is more effective than the sword of the Spirit. Persuasion is the method which must be employed in drawing people unto the Lord. The beauty and power of the message, and the gifts and graces which Christ bestows upon his people, both glorify the church, and furnish all the attractions which are needed to cause the Gentiles to run unto her. (Cf. Isa. 2: 2-4; 60: 4-9; Zech. 8: 23; John 12: 32; Acts 15: 15-18.)

#### Now Is the Time for Action

(Isa. 55: 6-9)

*Seek ye Jehovah while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

The verses just quoted may very properly be called the gospel of repentance and forgiveness; and it is in this section of the lesson text that we find the second great need of the human race, namely, that of pardon.

The Scriptures teach that all men have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God (cf. Horn. 3: 10, 23); but salvation has been provided for all who will seek the Lord. Jesus told his disciples to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation (Mark 16: 15); but when that is done, man must recognize his own responsibility, and resolve to meet the conditions which the gospel sets forth, if he is to enjoy the salvation which is thereby announced (Mark 16: 16). "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" (1 Tim. 2: 3, 4); and again, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to youward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3: 9).

But while man can and must do his part, if he expects to be saved; he should also remember that he should act while he has the opportunity. "Seek ye Jehovah while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near." This is enough to show that if man is unwilling to do his part, God's work will go for naught, so far as he is concerned. Or, to state the same thing in another way, if man is not willing to seek Jehovah while he has the opportunity, he will be denied the salvation which has been provided for all men, and will have to suffer the consequences of his own folly. This is precisely the lesson which the writer of Hebrews urged upon the faltering Jewish Christians to whom he wrote. (See Heb. 3: 12-4: 7.) When people are unwilling to believe that which the Lord has said, and put forth the effort on their part to do as they are commanded, there is no way for them to be saved.

The term "abundantly" should not be overlooked as we consider the pardon which the Lord will bestow upon his people. It matters not how great their sins may have been, God can and will forgive the penitent believer, who will do as he has commanded. In the text now under consideration, the sinner is told to forsake his evil way and unrighteous thoughts; and then return unto Jehovah. When Peter was preaching to the people in Jerusalem he said,

"Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." (Acts 3: 19; cf. 2: 38, 39.) The practical meaning of this is, Turn your back upon everything you are doing which is displeasing to the Lord, and then do that which he has commanded in order to get your sins forgiven, which in the case before us is to obey the Lord in baptism, or, which is the same thing, give a demonstration of the fact that you are a penitent believer, and that you want, above all things else, to obey the Lord. (Cf. Acts 22: 10, 16.) The same principle applies to erring Christians (Acts 8: 20ff.)

*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.*

It has already been pointed out in these studies that Isaiah, throughout his prophecy, employs a literary form known as "parallelism," in which similar or antithetic thoughts are reiterated in similar phrases. While that may not be specifically true in the passage now before us, it is a fact that one's thoughts and ways are very closely related. The ways of men are the routine of their lives, and their thoughts are responsible for the way they live. The people to whom Isaiah spoke were absorbed in their own thoughts and ways, and they could never be pleasing to God until they were changed; for their thoughts and ways were completely different from those of God. That principle must be recognized today; for a new mind must be acquired before a man can become a child of God. "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are past away; behold, they are become new." (2 Cor. 5: 17; cf. Tit. 3: 5; Rom. 12: 1, 2.) When men are preoccupied with their own interest, it is impossible for God to bless them as he could and would, if they would but turn to him. God is always ready to bless, but his pardon cannot be granted until our thoughts and ways are brought into harmony with his gracious will.



## God's Word Is Sufficient for His World Plans

(Isa. 55: 10-13)

*For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, and giveth seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*

God communicates his mind to men by means of words, and the message which is thus received has, like the rain and the snow, inherent powers of fruitfulness. The hope which the Christian has is not self-born, but it came down from heaven. God's word was spoken for a purpose, and it will not return to him until that purpose has been accomplished. We know that the gospel message is designed to show men how to escape from the ways of the evil one, and be brought safely into the haven of salvation; and it is as certain of accomplishing that end, as God is in heaven, if man will give himself to its influence. Wherever the gospel of Christ has been given free course, wherever man has faithfully endeavored to cultivate its spirit and live according to its principles, it has borne a harvest of eternal salvation. But such results can be reaped only where certain conditions are fulfilled; and those conditions are always named when man is told how to achieve the blessing which he desires. If he wants to be saved from his alien sins, then God tells him exactly what to do (cf. Mark 16: 15, 16; Acts 2: 37-39); if he wants to live a faithful Christian life and finally go to God for eternity, he is again given specific instructions (see 2 Pet. 1: 5-11). God's word never fails to accomplish his purpose, whether it be for the saving and sanctifying of the righteous, or the Punishing of the wicked. (Cf. 2 Cor. 2: 14-17.) God's word has been spoken, but man, to a large extent, will determine what the result will be. (Cf. Ezek. 33: 11.)

*For ye shall go out with joy, and*

*be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing; and the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree; and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree: and it shall be to Jehovah for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.*

It is in these verses that we learn something of the purity which mankind so sorely needs; for God would not be with his people and bless them so abundantly, if they were not pure in heart. (Cf. Matt. 5: 8.) The figurative language which Isaiah uses was intended to give some idea of the joyous return of the exiles from their captivity; but the principle is also applicable to our redemption from sin, and our journey to the eternal city of God.

The principle of "replacement" should not be overlooked. It is not enough for people to give up their sins; something better must be put in their stead. This lesson is forcefully taught by Jesus in the parable of the haunted house. (See Matthew 12: 43-45; cf. Tit. 2: 11, 12.) After getting rid of thoughts, habits, and ways of living which are wrong and degrading, the process is but half completed. The evils which have been driven out must be replaced immediately with the good, honorable, truthful, and best. (See again Tit. 2: 11, 12; cf. Phil. 4: 8, 9.) 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 without 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 the term. (Cf. Heb. 11: 6; James 2: 14-26.)

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

How many invitations can you think of which are listed in the Bible?

What can you say of the importance of the term "come" in the teaching of Jesus?

What are some of the things which are implied when an invitation is extended?

Discuss the setting of the invitation we are to study today.

What different attitudes were manifested by the exiles in Babylon?

### The Golden Text

Why do so many people remain indifferent to the Lord's invitation to them?

Under what circumstances were the words of the golden text for today spoken?

Who is apparently represented as inviting *men* to accept the Lord's offer of salvation?

### God's Free Offer of Salvation to All

Under what circumstances was the invitation of this lesson given?

What terms were used to indicate its importance?

In what sense is salvation without money and without price?

What are the three great needs of the human race?

What is implied by the term "prostitute"?

What can you say of the "market" which Isaiah mentioned?

Why should people always listen to that which Jehovah says?

What was the everlasting covenant which the prophet mentioned?

What is the most effective means the church has for winning others to Christ?

### Now Is the Time for Action

What great responsibility is set forth in this section of the lesson text?

What is the Lord's attitude toward the lost?

What lesson do we learn here regarding one's opportunity?

What is the basic reason for rejecting the Lord's invitation on the part of many people?

What is suggested by the "abundant" pardon which the Lord grants?

What did Peter tell an audience in Jerusalem to do in order to be saved?

Why is it essential that men change their thinking and ways?

What always happens before one can become a Christian?

### God's Word Is Sufficient for His World Plans

How does God illustrate the effectiveness of his word?

What always happens when he speaks a message to man?

What, then, is necessary before the best results can be obtained?

Show that God always names the conditions when he tells people how to obtain a blessing.

Who, to a large extent, determines the result of the word which God has spoken?

What lesson do we learn here regarding the purity which God's people enjoy?

What do we learn about the principle of "replacement" in the lives of people?

What do Jesus and Paul teach regarding this question?

What do you think should be done in order to get more people to recognize the need for heeding the principle of replacement?

What is always involved in living a righteous life?

What is necessary if religion is to be a power for good in our lives?

## Lesson XI—March 15, 1964

# ZION'S GLORY AND NEW NAME

## Lesson Text

Isa. 62: 1-12

1 For Zi-on's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Je-ru'-sa-lem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth.

2 And the nations shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory, and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of Je-ho'-vah shall name.

3 Thou shalt also be a crown of beauty in the hand of Je-ho'-vah, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.

4 Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Heph'-zi-bah, and thy land Beu'-lah; for Je-ho'-vah delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.

5 For as a young man marrieth a

virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee; and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.

6 I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Je-ru'-sa-lem; they shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that are Je-ho'-vah's remembrancers, take ye no rest,

7 And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Je-ru'-sa-lem a praise in the earth.

8 Je-ho'-vah hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength, Surely I will no more give thy grain to be food for thine enemies; and foreigners shall not drink thy new wine, for which thou hast labored:

9 But they that have garnered it shall eat it, and praise Je-ho'-vah;

and they that have gathered it shall drink it in the courts of my sanctuary.

10 Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up an ensign for the peoples.

11 Behold, Je-ho'-vah hath pro-

claimed unto the end of the earth, Say ye to the daughter of Zi-ōn, Be-hold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.

12 And they shall call them The holy people, The redeemed of Je-ho'-vah: and thou shalt be called Sought out, A city not forsaken.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch "* (Acts 11: 26.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Isa. 61: 1-11.

### Daily Bible Readings

March 9. M.....	The Lord Builds Zion (Psalm 102: 1-16)
March 10. T.....	Hearts Yearn for Zion (Psalm 133: 1-3)
March 11. W.....	Zion to Be Redeemed (Isa. 1: 1-27)
March 12. T.....	New Name After Gentiles Come In (Isa. 62: 1, 2)
March 13. F.....	Coming in of Gentiles (Acts 10: 1-48)
March 14. S.....	The New Name Given (Acts 11: 26)
March 15. S.....	Glorify God in This Name (1 Pet. 4: 12-19)

TIME.—712 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, Isaiah, and the Lord's people.

### Introduction

The term "Zion" has an interesting place among the words of the Bible. Baker's Dictionary of Theology sums up the principal facts of the place under four heads, namely, (1) its geographical location—the lower eastern hill or ridge of Jerusalem; (2) its history—so far as the Scriptures are concerned, Zion began when David captured the Jebusite fortress, and made it into "the city of David," 2 Sam. 5: 6-10. The city's predicted end came when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70, Mic. 3: 12; Jer. 26: 18. (3) figuratively—Zion is sometimes made to represent the city of Jerusalem, Isa. 3: 16ff; 28 18; and sometimes the entire Hebrew nation, Joel 2: 21-27; (4) typically and spiritually—Zion (gathering significance from its geographical, historical, and figurative background) became, in the Psalms and the prophets, the counterpart of the literal city, the place where God meets with his people, apparently both the church and heaven, especially the latter, Heb. 12: 22; Rev. 14: 1; cf. Gal. 4: 26.

In keeping with the thought of our lesson for today, it should be noted that we are to think of Zion in terms of the Messianic kingdom; and as we do that, let us consider its long and checkered Old Testament history. As already pointed out,

Zion became the city of David, and the center of the great kingdom over which he reigned. And then, after the passing of David, the city was sometimes a magnificent center of the world, in the days of Solomon, for example; and then sometimes it reached the depths of degradation, when the city was destroyed by the Babylonians. Sometimes righteousness reigned in the city, and sometimes evil had the ascendancy. But with the passing of the old order of things, that is, the nation under the law of Moses, a new day was to dawn for the city. (Cf. Zech. 1: 16, 17; 8: 1-3.) It was when the Messiah came to Zion that its greatest glory began.

A "new name" always indicates that some kind of a change has taken place; and this, of course, was especially true of God's people with the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of his kingdom. A name should always fit its subject, and when that is not true, then a change should be made. The fact that glory would be given to Zion, and that the name itself would have another and spiritual meaning, was enough to justify the bestowing of a new name upon its citizens. This was not the first time that new names were given to people, as may be seen by reading the records of the lives of

such people as Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, and others. But the important thing about all of this is that those who receive the new names, espec-

ially those which were divinely given, live up to the meaning and significance of the new appellation. (Cf. 1 Pet. 4: 16.)

### The Golden Text

*"The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."* The question as to the origin of the name *Christian* has long been in dispute. The name itself occurs only three times in the entire new Testament—Acts 26: 28; 1 Pet. 4: 16, in the singular; Acts 11: 26, in the plural. It is clearly evident that the disciples themselves did not originate the name. They called themselves saints, believers, disciples, brethren, etc., but there is nothing to support the idea that they were the first to call themselves Christians. They *were called* Christians, which indicates that the name came from some other source. It is equally clear from Acts 24: 5 that the Jews did not bestow the name Christian upon the Lord's people. There are some Bible students who are of the opinion that the name was given in derision by their enemies; but there is no basis in fact for this view. Meyer says, "There is nothing to support the view that the name was at first a title of ridicule."

We do know that Jehovah, some seven hundred years before the coming of Christ, promised that his people would be called by a new name, as we shall see in our lesson text for today; and he even said that it would take place when the Gentiles should see his righteousness. The church itself was a new institution (cf. Eph. 2: 15); and, as Jesse R. Kellems expresses the matter, "We would also expect that the individual members who constitute the church would be called by a name, divine, different, and infinitely transcending all earth-

ly names in that it would be bestowed by the Father himself." Dr. Kellems then goes on to say that James refers to "that worthy name by which ye are called," which evidently was the name Christian.

The Greek word for "were called" is *chrematizo*, which is derived from *chrematizmos*. The latter term is found only one time in the entire New Testament—Rom. 11: 4, and means, according to Thayer, Arndt-Gingrich, and others, a *divine* statement or response. The verb which occurs in Acts 11: 26 (were called) is also found in the following passages: Matt. 2: 12, 22 (warned); Luke 2: 26 (revealed); Acts 10: 22 (warned); Rom. 7: 3 (shall be called); Heb. 8: 5; 11: 7; 12: 25 (warned). If anyone will read all of these passages, he can easily see that the subject of the verb in each instance is a divine being or agency; and there is no reason for thinking that it is any different in Acts 11: 26, especially in view of the meaning of the noun form and Isaiah's prophecy. The following summary therefore seems fully justified, namely (1) God promised that a new name would be given, *when* the Gentiles saw his righteousness; (2) the name "Christian" is the only new name which was given when the Gentiles came into the church; (3) Antioch was an appropriate place for the name to be given, since it was the first city to have a great church composed of both Jews and Gentiles; and (4) the original word for "called," as we have just seen, implies a divine source or agency.

### The Text Explained

#### The Prophet's Unceasing Intercession for Zion and the Certainty of Its Restoration

(Isa. 62: 1-5)

*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth.* It has already been pointed out in these lessons that Isaiah was the Messianic

prophet, and having reached the point where he saw the glory of the messianic kingdom, he boldly affirmed that he would not hold his peace until the blessings which are described in the preceding chapter had become a reality. We know from the Lord's own words in Luke 4: 16ff. that the commission in Isa. 61: 1-3 had its fulfillment in him; and it is, of course, altogether possible that the pronoun "I" in the

verse now under consideration also referred to him. At any rate, whether by Isaiah or Christ, the message would be proclaimed until God's purpose in his people was accomplished.

This should be a great lesson to teachers and preachers of the gospel today. It is God's will that all men be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9); and we should determine not to hold our peace until that work is brought to pass, insofar as it is possible. We know from the teaching of the Bible that people must be taught the truth, if they are to obey it; and that always requires strenuous efforts on the part of faithful teachers of the word. Read Paul's address to the Ephesians elders in Acts 20: 18-35. In his final letter, which was addressed to Timothy, he said, "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 hearken 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." (2 Tim. 4: 1-5.) God does not want us to give up before our work is accomplished, any more than he wanted the prophet to hold his peace, until the righteousness and salvation of Zion would go forth as brightness and as a lamp that burneth.

*And the nations shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory; and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of Jehovah shall name.* Throughout the history of God's people under Moses, no one was entitled to enter their assembly or to enjoy their fellowship, except the descendants of Abraham, through Isaac and Jacob, and those who became proselytes to that order. This policy was divinely authorized, and it continued as long as the law lasted. But with the coming of the Messiah a change was to be made, as we have already

seen in previous lessons. "And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem." (Isa. 2: 2, 3; cf. Luke 24: 45-47; Gen. 12: 1-3; Gal. 3: 8.)

The promise regarding the Gentiles began to be fulfilled at the house of Cornelius, in Caesarea, some eight or ten years after the establishment of the church on the first Pentecost following the Lord's ascension. (Acts 10: Iff.) When Peter told the people on Pentecost what they should do and of the promise which they would receive, he added this word of explanation regarding the promise of the Holy Spirit, "For to you [Jews] is the promise, and to your children and to all that are afar off [Gentiles, Gal. 3: 14; Eph. 2: 14-22], even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him." (Acts 2: 39.) The history contained in the Book of Acts gives a further account of the work among the Gentiles, and climaxes the statement with these words, "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." (Read Acts 11: 19-26.) There is no other name by which God's people were called, prior to this or after, which can correctly be called a new name, nor one which more fittingly indicates the relationship which his people sustain to the Christ, that is, the Messiah.

*Thou shalt be a crown of beauty in the hand of Jehovah, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt be no more termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolates but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah for Jehovah delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee; and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.*

The figurative expressions used in

the verses just quoted were intended to show, by comparison and contrast, the great favor in which the church would be. During the time of the decline in Israel, and especially during the captivity, Zion was likened to a woman who had been forsaken by her husband, or one who had been left a disconsolate widow. But when the Messiah came, she would be called Hephzi-bah, *My delight is in her* (cf. 2 Kings 21: 1), and Beulah, *Married* (see marginal notes). Verses 4, 5 are rendered by Moffatt in these words, " 'Forsaken' shall no longer be your name, your land shall no more be called 'Desolate'; you shall be 'my Delight,' your land shall be 'my wedded wife,' for the Eternal takes delight in you. And your land shall again be married. As a young man weds a maiden, so your Founder marries you, and as a bridegroom thrills to his bride, so shall your God thrill to you."

### Jehovah's Remembrancers and His Solemn Promise

(Isa. 62: 6-9)

*I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that are Jehovah's remembrancers, take ye no rest, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth: The "remembrancers" of Jehovah (those who "make mention of the Lord," King James Version) were the watchmen upon the wall of Jerusalem, in all probability, the prophets. Their duty in this instance required continuous effort on their part. They were to take no rest themselves, and give no rest to him who had the power to bless the city. Or, to state the same thing in another way, they were to remind God constantly of his promise to his people, and never cease to watch for its fulfillment. This is substantially what Jesus meant when he taught his disciples to exercise importunity in prayer. (See Luke 11: 1-13; 18: 1-8; cf. Isa. 43: 25, 26; Jer. 14: 21.)*

The Hebrew word for "remembrancers" is *zakar*, and, as already pointed out, the idea, as used in the passage now under consideration, is to remind God, reverently of course, of his promise to his people. The same word is found in Gen. 40: 14, where Joseph requested the chief

butler to *make mention* of him unto Pharaoh. There are many examples throughout the Bible of God's people calling upon him to remember his promise to them, and the fact that we are both permitted and encouraged to do so, should give strength to our hearts. Jehovah commanded Jacob to return to his homeland, and when he heard that his brother Esau was coming to meet him he was distressed and filled with fear, and he called upon Jehovah and said, "O Jehovah, who saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will do thee good: I am not worthy of the least of all the lovingkindnesses, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two companies. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he come and smite me, the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude." (Read Gen. 32: 6-12; cf. Heb. 3: 1, 2; Rom. 15: 30.)

*Jehovah hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength, Surely I will no more give thy grain to be food for thine enemies; and foreigners shall not drink thy new wine, for which thou hast labored: but they that have garnered it shall eat it, and praise Jehovah; and they that have gathered it shall drink it in the courts or my sanctuary.*

It was a common occurrence, throughout the history of rebellious Israel, for their enemies to take away the crops and vintage which they had produced (cf. Judges 6: 11-13); but now, in their new redeemed relationship, Jehovah solemnly promises them that that condition will no longer prevail. On the contrary, they will have such a feeling of security that they can come before the Lord and continually enjoy his blessings. There is also a suggestion of thanksgiving implied here; for they shall praise Jehovah as they eat. (Cf. 1 Tim. 4: 3, 4.) The passage just cited clearly shows that God expects his people to recognize that he is the giver of their blessings, and they are to do that by acknowledging it with thanksgiving. Paul's own practice in Acts 27: 35 is a good commentary on

what is meant by receiving our food with thanksgiving. (Cf. 1 Sam. 9: 13; John 6: 11; Matt. 15: 36.) The Lord's people should always offer thanks before or at the time of their eating; for our food is "sanctified through the word of God and prayer." (1 Tim. 4: 5.)

### The Call to Prepare the Way for the Returning Exiles

(Isa. 62: 10-12)

*Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; life up an ensign for the peoples. Behold, Jehovah hath proclaimed unto the end of the earth, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. And they shall call them The holy people, The Redeemed of Jehovah: and thou shalt be called Sought out, A city not forsaken.*

The primary reference is evidently to the deliverance of the Jewish captives from Babylon, which became a kind of type of the greater deliverance from sin which was wrought by Jesus for all who are willing to accept his salvation. In commenting on verse 10, E. M. Zerr says, "Once more the 'telescope' is extended into the next dispensation, and the prophet sees the great favor of God to be given to his people. The form of language pertains to the literal rebuilding and restoration of the land of Palestine after the captivity. But the important application of the prophecy is to the work that was to be accomplished in the time of Christ. We shall have this statement verified before getting through with the chapter. *Lift up a standard* means that the prophet was to raise a flag or banner in token of the universal provision the Lord would some day make for the *people*, which includes a promise to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews." (Bible Commentary, Vol. 3, p. 352f.)

Isaiah has several times referred to the "ensign for the peoples" (plural) evidently meaning the Gentiles. For example, "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the root of Jesse, that standeth for an ensign of the peoples, unto him shall the nations seek; and his resting-place

shall be glorious." (Isa. 11: 10; cf. 49: 22; John 3: 14, 15.) The Messiah was represented as a plant or tree, which grew out of the apparently dead roots of a decayed tree. (Cf. Isa. 53: 2; Rom. 15: 12; Rev. 5: 2; 16.) This promised Redeemer is portrayed by Isaiah as "an ensign of the people," that is, a standard toward which they might look, and around which they might gather. This was literally fulfilled when Jesus was raised upon the cross. "And I if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself. But this he said, signifying by what manner of death he should die." (John 12: 32, 33.) The "resting-place," in its practical application to us, is the church. (Cf. Isa. 60: 13; Eph 5: 25-27: as the resting-place of the ark in the sanctuary of the temple under the first covenant.)

The highway, which to us is the way of salvation, would be made plain, and all obstacles would be moved out of the path of those who would travel it. That is a work which was originally accomplished, that is, in New Testament times; but in our day the way has to a large extent been obscured and many hindrances have been placed therein. It is, of course, the duty of every Christian, and especially those who are charged with preaching the gospel, to proclaim the way of salvation in all of its ancient purity, and to see to it that every obstacle is taken away. The salvation which the Lord made possible is available for every lost person; and the Lord is amply able to reward every one who will come unto him. (Cf. Matt. 11: 28-30; Rev. 22: 12.)

The people of the Lord are indeed a holy people, and the redeemed of the Jehovah, and they should do everything within their power to make that impression upon the people around them. The church is literally the "called out ones," being called out of the ways of sin by the gospel. "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. (2 Thess. 2:

13, 14.) Those who are called by the gospel make up the church, and the following statement shows how the Lord feels about that body. "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify

it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Eph. 5: 25-27.)

### Questions for Discussion

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

#### Introduction

What are some of the facts we learn from the Bible regarding Zion?  
In what way is Zion related to our lesson for today?

What is meant by the glory of Zion?  
Why was a new name appropriate for God's people under the new order of things?

#### The Golden Text

What appears to have been the origin of the name "Christian" for God's people of this age?  
What are the important reasons for accepting the divine origin of the name?  
Discuss the several occurrences of the original word for "were called" in the New Testament.

#### The Prophet's Unceasing Intercession for Zion and the Certainty of Its Restoration

What reason is stated for the prophet's unceasing interest in Zion?  
Show why it is possible that the reference was to Christ, rather than to Isaiah.  
What important lesson should we learn from this?  
What great work has the Lord assigned to us in this respect?  
What motive should always govern the teacher of God's word?  
Discuss Paul's charge to Timothy regarding gospel preaching.  
Discuss the attitude which God's people had toward other nations during the time of Moses.  
What change was to take place with the coming of the Messiah?  
When was the new name for the Lord's people to be given?

When and under what circumstances did the Gentiles see the righteousness of the Lord's people?

What did Isaiah say regarding the origin of the name?

How did the Lord reveal what his own attitude would be toward his people under Christ?

#### Jehovah's Remembrancers and His Solemn Promise

Who were the Lord's "remembrancers" and what is the meaning of the term?

What was their duty?

In what sense were they to give Jehovah no rest?

What is meant by "importunity in prayer"?

Discuss some Bible examples of the actions of remembrancers.

What solemn promise did God make to his people?

Why should people always offer thanks for their food?

#### The Call to Prepare the Way for the Returning Exiles

What was the setting of this section of the lesson text?

In what way would the ultimate fulfillment come to pass?

What was the "ensign for the peoples"?

What is indicated by the plural "peoples"?

When and under what circumstances was the ensign raised?

In what way are God's people in Christ described?

Why are they "holy"?

How are people called out of the world and into Christ?

Why is the term "church" used to describe the Lord's people?

How does Christ feel toward the church?

What great responsibility does this place upon every Christian?

## Lesson XII—March 22, 1964

### JEREMIAH'S CALL AND COMMISSION

#### Lesson Text

##### Jer. 1: 1-10

1 The words of Jer-e-mi'-ah the son of Hil-ki'-ah, of the priests that were in An'-a-thoth in the land of Ben'-ja-min:

2 To whom the word of Je-ho'-vah came in the days of Jo-si'-ah the son of A'-mon, king of Ju'-dah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.

3 It came also in the days of Je-hoi'-a-kim the son of Jo-si'-ah, king

of Ju'-dah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zed-e-ki'-ah, the son of Jo-si'-ah, king of Ju'-dah, unto the carrying away of Je-ru'-salem captive in the fifth month.

4 Now the word of Je-ho'-vah came unto me, saying,

5 Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou earnest forth out of the womb I sanctified



**thee;** I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations.

6 Then said I, Ah, Lord Je-ho'-vah! behold, I know not how to speak; for I am a child.

7 But Je-ho'-vah said unto me, Say not, I am a child; for to whom-soever I shall send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak.

8 Be not afraid because of them;

for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith Je-ho'-vah.

9 Then Je-ho'-vah put forth his hand, and touched my mouth; and Je-ho'-vah said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth:

10 See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.

**Golden Text.**—*"Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number"* (Jer. 2: 32.)

**Devotional Heading.**—Jer. 2: 9-13.

## Daily Bible Readings

March 16. M.....	The Saddened Prophet (Jer. 8: 18-22)
March 17. T.....	Jeremiah's Call (Jer. 1: 1-10)
March 18. W.....	Jeremiah's Ministry (Jer. 26: 1-9)
March 19. T.....	Effects of Jeremiah's Ministry (Jer. 26: 10-19)
March 20. F.....	Jeremiah's Lamentations (Lam. 1: 1-10)
March 21. S.....	Jeremiah a Courageous Man (Jer. 17: 1-27)
March 22. S.....	Jeremiah Warns Judah (Jer. 22: 1-12)

**TIME.**—About 610-608 B.C.

**PLACE.**—Jerusalem.

**PERSONS.**—Jehovah and Jeremiah.

## Introduction

The name "Jeremiah" means *whom Jehovah appoints*, and the prophet who bore that name is known to us, perhaps, with greater intimacy and detail than almost any other character in the Old Testament. He was misnamed "the weeping prophet" by those who have never fully understood his character. If his utterance were gloomy at times, it was because he spoke under gloomy circumstances. If he spoke sternly to his countrymen, it was in an effort to awaken their conscience and correct their mistakes. The phrase "love wearing the disguise of anger" fitly describes Jeremiah's attitude toward his people. Jeremiah began his prophecy during the reign of Josiah, and he continued his work until the kingdom of Judah was taken into captivity. He sought to stem the tides of evil which grew from bad to worse, and to save the kingdom of Judah from the terrible fate toward which she was hastening. And it is also noteworthy that his prophecies concerning surrounding nations were strikingly fulfilled.

In speaking of the prophet Jeremiah, John Foster Kent says, "Closely associated with Zephaniah was his young contemporary Jeremiah. Jere-

miah was a native of the *little town* of Anathoth, a northern suburb of Jerusalem. He was apparently a descendant of the priestly house of Eli, which had been banished from Jerusalem by Solomon. Naturally shy and shrinking, Jeremiah had the persistency and devotion that have given us the world's greatest martyrs. For fully half a century he was, as he declares, 'a brazen wall against the kings of Judah, its princes, and its common people.' During most of this period they fought against him but did not overcome him, for, as he tells us, Jehovah was ever with him to deliver him. In the opening years of Josiah's reign, Jeremiah joined with Zephaniah in the attempt to arouse the conscience of the people. The first six chapters of his prophecy contain extracts from the addresses which he then delivered. The event which apparently prepared the way for the public activity of each of these prophets was the approach, about the year 626 B.C., of a horde of Scythian invaders. One of the impressions which convinced Jeremiah that he must assume the role of a prophet was the vision of a caldron, brewing hot and facing the north, which symbolized the fact that 'from the north

disaster is brewing for the inhabitants of the land.'"

The Book of Jeremiah is far richer in information regarding that particular period of Judah's history than anything we possess, especially during the last days of that kingdom. In fact, it is probably true that those years are better known than any period in Hebrew history. The northern kingdom had gone into Assyrian captivity more than a hundred and thirty years before, and Judah was compelled to stand alone against her enemies. But Judah had grown progressively corrupt. The last king who made any serious effort to stay

the flood of increasing wickedness was Josiah who, as we have already seen, was reigning when Jeremiah began to prophesy. Assyria and Egypt were contending for the supremacy at the time of Jeremiah's birth, but it was his to see both countries subdued by the Babylonians. Jeremiah also foretold the downfall of Babylon, and the deliverance of Israel. "In those days, and in that time, saith Jehovah, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I leave as a remnant." (Read Jeremiah 50: 1-20.)

### The Golden Text

*"Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number."* It should be observed at the very beginning of our consideration of the golden text that the sin of the people lay in the fact that they had forgotten God. They had persistently banished the thought of God from their minds, and had turned their attention to their idols. They had become so entangled in the things around them, as to leave no room for God in their hearts and lives. (Cf. Rom. 1: 18ff.) "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.) Any one who will read the eighth chapter of Romans, and especially the last paragraph, will soon see that the only thing which can rob people of their fellowship with God is their own unrighteous attitude and conduct. When people forget God, there is little hope for their ultimate salvation.

How many days of our lives have passed without suitable remembrances of God? Many of us strive so eagerly for an earthly paradise, that our outlook is narrowed by its horizon; and we, accordingly, lose sight of the heavenly goal. We grow so intent on improving this world, that we have little time to think of the heavenly country. (Cf. Heb. 11: 8-10.) The people of Jeremiah's day

did not have as much regard and affection for God, as young women usually have for their jewelry and fine clothing; and he, accordingly, asked, "Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?" The answer to those questions, of course, is No, and the reason for it is obvious; their minds were continually on them. It is sad when people are more in love with and are more eager for the material things of this life, than they are for God. Such an attitude is essential worldliness. (See Phil. 3: 17-19; cf. 1 John 2: 15-17; James 4: 4.)

David gives the secret of his remembering God in these words: "I have set Jehovah always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." (Psalm 16: 8.) This is enough to show us that there is great importance regarding that which is before us. We also learn from the words of David that man has a responsibility in this respect. "I have set Jehovah always before me." Peter made use of this very text centuries later in his sermon on the first Pentecost following the Lord's resurrection and ascension. (See Acts 2: 25-28.) It requires effort on our part to keep God before us always; but there is great reward in doing so. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." (Isa. 26: 3.)

### The Text Explained

#### Jeremiah and the Extent of his Prophecy

(Jer. 1: 1-3)

*The words of Jeremiah the son of*

*Hilkah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin: to whom the word of Jehovah came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon,*

*king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. It came also in the days of Jehoiaxim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.*

The long period of Jeremiah's prophetic career embraced many history-making events, and anyone who will consider his history will have a good view of the strategic position which he occupied. As indicated in the text, his home was in Anathath, one of the cities of Benjamin which were set aside for the priests. (See Josh. 21: 18.) Following the death of Josiah, three of his sons and one grandson reigned in Jerusalem. The first was Jehoahaz, but he was soon deposed by Pharaoh-necoh, king of Egypt, and his brother, by the same authority, was placed on the throne in his stead. This brother's name was Eliakim, but the king of Egypt changed it to Jehoiaxim. Jehoiaxim was allowed to reign for eleven years, but it was during his time that the world dominion was shifted from Egypt to Babylon, and, following the death of Jehoiaxim, the king of Babylon set Jehoiachin, also known as Jeconiah and Coniah, Jehoiaxim's son, upon the throne. But he was allowed to reign only three months, before Nebuchadnezzar carried him to Babylon. Jehoiachin's uncle was the next and final ruler of Judah before the captivity. This uncle's name was Mattaniah, but the king of Babylon changed it to Zedekiah. For the sake of the record, it should be observed that Zedekiah, coming as he did after Coniah, was not considered in the line from David; that would have required that the new king be the son of Coniah. Zedekiah was indeed a descendant of David, but not of Coniah: and it was for that reason that the line of kings from David ended with Coniah. "Thus saith Jehovah, Write this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days; for no more shall a man of his seed prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling in Judah." (Jeremiah 22: 30. Read the entire paragraph, beginning with verse 24.)

Jeremiah, during the trying times of his long career, lived in the midst of his people, pleading with them

and exhorting them in the name of God to renounce their sinful ways. He had to deal with real problems, and was always bold and courageous, but that attitude caused him to be hated and persecuted by the very people he was trying to help. Jeremiah has a place among the greatest writers and prophets of the Hebrew people, although little is known of the actual method by which his oral messages came to be written in the form in which they have come down to us. We know that at least some of that which Jeremiah spoke was dictated by the prophet to Baruch, whom we would call Jeremiah's secretary. (See Jer. 36: 4.) The Book of Jeremiah contains much biographical material concerning the prophet, especially of events near the end of his life in Judah. It is possible that Baruch wrote that. Some of the loveliest passages of Hebrew poetry are also found in the book now under consideration. Jeremiah had all the imagination, the passion, and the creative power of the poet, whether he was describing the despair of a prolonged drought (Jer. 14: 1-6); the utter desolation which was to come upon the land of Judah (Jer. 4: 23f.); or the lament of Rachel for her children (Jer. 31: 15ff.).

### His Call and Commission

(Jer. 1: 4-8)

*Now the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou earnest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee; I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations.*

Jeremiah, in all probability, had been a student of the prophets who had gone before him, and had learned much from them regarding the people of the Lord and his dealings with them. But now the time had arrived for his own work in that field. His call came directly from God, and that, of course, settled the question of his inspiration. God knows the end from the beginnings, and it is for that reason that he knew of Jeremiah before his conception and birth. This foreknowledge of God enables him to form his purpose for any individual in advance of his birth, but the Bible nowhere teaches that God overrules the free-agency of man. Jehovah called the name of Cyrus, king of Persia, more than a

hundred years before his birth, and that fact had a tremendous effect on the future conduct of that ruler; but there is no indication that Cryus acted contrary to his own will. (See Isa. 44: 24-45: 13.)

It is fair to conclude from Rom. 8: 28 that God has a purpose for every responsible person, and this truth should have a profound effect on our thinking. God had a definite work for Jeremiah to do, and he has a definite work for us to do. It is true that God does not speak directly to people in this age of the world, as he did to Jeremiah; but that does not mean that he does not speak at all. It was through men like Jeremiah, Moses (Ex. 20: 1), Paul (Gal. 1: 15, 16), and others, that God made known his will to the peoples of the earth; but since its full revelation, any person who is willing to do his best to discover God's purpose for him will certainly have that desire satisfied. (Cf. John 7: 17; Matt. 13: 12.)

While it appears to be true that Jeremiah's principal work was among his own people, the text now before us says that he was called to be a prophet to the nations. "I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations." This will be considered further in the last section of our lesson text for today. However, there is a lesson here which we should not overlook. God has always had a people who were his in a special way, but he has also made it plain that he is the ruler of all mankind. (Cf. Dan. 4: 17; Rom. 13: 1.) God can, and often does, use his people in dealing with those who have so far rejected his will; but it should always be remembered that even this service must be in accordance with his inspired will. Even God's chosen people never have the right to take such matters into their own hands.

*Then said I, Ah Lord Jehovah! behold, I know not how to speak; for I am a child. But Jehovah said unto me, Say not, I am a child; for to whomsoever I send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid because of them; for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith, Jehovah.*

Jeremiah was probably in his late teens or early twenties when Jehovah called him to be a prophet. The Hebrew word for "child" in this instance is *naar*, and it is the same

word which was used in designating Absalom as a "young man." (2 Sam. 18: 5.) The reluctance which was manifested by Jeremiah when God called him, was often shown by others when they were summoned to their work. (Cf. Ex. 4: 10; Jonah 1: 3.) Jeremiah evidently understood something of what it meant to speak for God, as the prophets were required to do; and it was but natural for him to shrink from the tremendous responsibility, especially during the critical times which were upon them. Furthermore, Jeremiah was a man of peace, and he evidently realized something of the ordeal which would be his as he undertook to warn the people of the punishment which was sure to come upon them, if they continued in their sins.

But Jehovah quickly assured Jeremiah that he would be with him, and he also made it plain to him that it was not his prerogative to refuse to obey the will of the Lord. On the contrary, Jeremiah would have to go where God sent him, and speak that which he commanded. The fact that he was young and insignificant was no reason why he should not enter heartily into the work to which God was calling him. There are all too many professed Christians who are pleading the lack of ability today. No man, to be sure, can do more than his ability will allow, but every person can do that. The parable of the talents impresses this very lesson. The man with the two talents could not do as much as the man with five was able to accomplish, but he could do as much as the other, in proportion to his ability. And, too, the man with one talent felt his inability to the extent that he did nothing, and was condemned for his failure. God never makes a mistake in calling a man into his service; for he will always supply that which is lacking in in ability, etc.

Many young men have been called into God's service, and they have been given tremendous responsibilities; but when God goes with them, they have nothing to fear. Paul often said to Timothy, Titus, and doubtless others, "Let no man despise thee," or, "Let no man despise thy youth." The physical condition of the speaker has nothing to do with the acceptance of his message, if he is speaking God's will. It was true

that the people to whom Jehovah was sending Jeremiah were very wicked, and would resent anything which he said which was contrary to their wishes; but that condition made it all the more essential that God's will be spoken. The New Testament is full of teaching along this line. Jesus has promised to be with his people when they speak his message; but even the fear of persecution and death must be no barrier to the faithful performance of God's commands. (Cf. John 16: 1, 2; 2 Tim. 4: 1-5.)

### The Confirmation of Jeremiah's Call and Commission

(Jer. 1: 9, 10)

*Then Jehovah put forth his hand, and touched my mouth; and Jehovah said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth: see, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant..*

The touching of Jeremiah's mouth by Jehovah was symbolic of the fact that the Lord would give him utterance, notwithstanding the feeling that he could not do as he was commanded. It meant that Jeremiah would be God's mouthpiece, which is the exact meaning of the term "prophet"—one who speaks for another, in this case one who spoke for Jehovah. (Cf. Isa. 51: 16; Ezek. 2: 8-10; Dan. 10: 16.) When Jehovah put his words into the mouth of Jeremiah, the latter was filled with a sense of the inward presence of Jehovah. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy words were unto me a joy and the rejoicing of my heart: for I am called by thy name, O Jehovah, God of hosts." (Jer. 15: 16.) This should give us some idea of how we should feel when are conscious of having the word of God in our hearts, and are certain that we are obeying it. (Read the entire paragraph of Jer. 15: 15-18.)

Jeremiah did not experience any feeling of guilt when the hand of Jehovah touched his mouth, as did Isaiah at the vision of God, and exclaimed, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts." (Isa. 6: 5.) The word of

Jehovah which Jeremiah was to take to his people was filled with energy, and it accomplished the task for which it was intended. The writer of Hebrew describes the word of the Lord in these words: "For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him whom we have to do." (Heb. 4: 12, 13; cf. Jer. 5: 14; 23: 29.)

The task which Jehovah gave Jeremiah to accomplish was twofold in its nature. Not only was he to be a prophet to his own people, but to other nations as well. As one reads through the Book of Jeremiah, he will find that the prophet often spoke concerning international affairs. (Cf., for example, Jer. 25: 12-38.) In commenting on verse 10 of our lesson text, A. R. Fausset says, "He was to have his eye upon the nations, and to predict their destruction or restoration, according as their conduct was bad or good. Prophets are said to *do* that which they *foretell* shall be done; for their word is God's word: and his word is his instrument whereby he doeth all things (Gen. 1: 3; Psalm 33: 6, 9). Word and deed are one thing with him. What his prophet *saith* is as certain as if it were *done*. The prophet's own consciousness was absorbed into that of God: so closely united to God did he feel himself that Jehovah's words and deeds are described as his."

The Book of Jeremiah is a thrilling record of the faithfulness of the prophet to his call and commission. If anyone should feel that he is excused from doing that which God commands him to do because of strong opposition, even to the extent of persecution and death, he will be greatly strengthened and encouraged if he will read and study the experiences of this great prophet. Paul says, "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; cf. 1 Cor. 10: 6, 11.)

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What is the meaning of the name "Jeremiah"?  
What can you say of his position in the Bible?  
Why is he sometimes called the "weeping prophet"?  
Give an appraisal of his life and influence.  
What were the general conditions under which Jeremiah prophesied?

### The Golden Text

What was the basic cause of the sins of the people of God in Jeremiah's time?  
What always happens when people forget God?  
Why is it that so many people forget him?  
What is the real secret of remembering the Lord?  
What reward always comes to those who do remember him?  
What does it mean to remember God?

### Jeremiah and the Extent of His Prophecy

Approximately how long did the prophetic career of Jeremiah continue?  
What was the condition of the kingdom of Judah during the time of his ministry?  
What important prophecy did Jeremiah give regarding the end of the kingdom of Judah?  
How did the people generally feel toward Jeremiah?  
In what spirit did he go about his work?  
What is known about the manner in which some of the material of Jeremiah's prophecies was put into writing?  
Give a general appraisal of the Book of Jeremiah as a whole.

### His Call and Commission

Under what circumstances was Jeremiah called to be a prophet?  
Discuss the foreknowledge of God with reference to one's character.  
How do we know that God has a purpose for the life of every individual?  
In what way should one go about discovering what God's purpose is for him?  
What was the extent of Jeremiah's prophetic ministry?  
What does the Bible teach regarding Jehovah's dealings with the nations of the earth?  
How did Jeremiah react to his call from God?  
Why would he hesitate to enter into such a work?  
What answer did Jehovah give to him?  
What lesson should we learn from this?  
How do we know that every person will be held accountable for his ability and opportunity?  
Why do many people react unfavorably to the teaching of a young person?  
How does the Lord regard such an attitude?

### The Confirmation of Jeremiah's Call and Commission

What was the significance of Jehovah's touching Jeremiah's mouth?  
How did the reception of the word of God affect the prophet?  
What was the effect of the preaching of God's word on the people?  
What always happens when the word of the Lord is made known?  
How does the writer of Hebrews estimate God's word?  
What effect should this knowledge have on us?  
What did God tell Jeremiah that his general work would be?  
In what sense can a prophet do such great work?  
What important lesson should we learn from the study today?

## Lesson XIII—March 29, 1964

# JEREMIAH PLEADS FOR OBEDIENCE

## Lesson Text

Jer. 7: 1-11

1 The word that came to Jeremi-ah from Je-ho'-vah, saying,

2 Stand in the gate of Je-ho'-vah's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of Je-ho'-vah, all ye of Ju'-dah, that enter in at these gates to worship Je-ho'-vah.

3 Thus saith Je-ho'-vah of hosts, the God of Is'-ra-el, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place.

4 Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of Je-ho'-vah, the temple of Je-ho'-vah. the temple of Je-ho'-vah, are these.

5 For if ye thoroughly amend your

ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute justice between a man and his neighbor;

6 If ye oppress not the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your own hurt:

7 Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, from of old even for evermore.

8 Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit.

9 Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and

burn incense unto Ba'-al, and walk after other gods that ye have not known,

10 And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered;

**Golden Text.**—*"Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way; and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."* (Jer. 6: 16.)

**Devotional Reading.**—Jer. 7: 12-20.

## Daily Bible Readings

March 23. M.....Destruction on the Disobedient (2 Thess. 1: 1-9)  
 March 24. T.....A Disobedient People (Jer. 7: 21-26)  
 March 25. W. Obedience Better Than Sacrifice (1 Sam. 15: 17-23)  
 March 26. T.....Christ, Our Example in Obedience (Phil. 2: 1-11)  
 March 27. F.....Obedience Produces Great Blessing (Deut. 11: 26-32)  
 March 28. S.....Disobedience Leads to Punishment (Deut. 28: 15-24)  
 March 29. S.....Blessedness to Those Who Obey (Rev. 22: 14, 15)

**Time.**—About 608 B.C.

**Place.**—Jerusalem.

**PERSONS.**—Jehovah, Jeremiah, and the people of Judah.

## Introduction

In our last lesson we learned something of the call and commission of Jeremiah to the prophetic ministry. He entered into his duties without delay, and concerning his task, James Hastings notes that "never was heavier burden laid upon the shoulders of mortal man. A man of tender, loving, yielding, deeply impressible spirit, Jeremiah loved his country intensely. He would have given all that he had to see Judah flourishing, Jerusalem prosperous; and lo, we see him compelled by his destiny to announce to his fellow-citizens nothing but misfortune. Yet we may recognize in Jeremiah's character a special fitness for his mission. That tender, shrinking, sympathetic heart could more fully feel, and more adequately express, the ineffable Divine sorrow over the guilty people, the eternal love which was never stronger than at the moment when it seemed to have been metamorphosed into bitter wrath and implacable vengeance."

As Jeremiah endeavored to get his message across to the idolatrous and rebellious people of the southern kingdom, he contrasted their earlier faithfulness with their present infidelity: "Thus saith Jehovah, I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals; how thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto Jeho-

that ye may do all these abominations?"

11 Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it, saith Je-ho'-vah.

vah, the first-fruits of his increase: all that devour him shall be guilty: evil shall come upon them, saith Jehovah." (Jer. 2: 2, 3.) The people in the wilderness were not perfect; they sinned often; but their history was one of greatness in spite of their faults and failures. It took them much longer to reach the land of Canaan, because of their sins (Deut. 1: 19-26), than was originally planned; but still they got there because they followed the Divine leading. However, had it not been for God's eternal interest in them, they would all have perished in the wilderness.

The offense of idolatry on the part of the Lord's people was infinitely greater than it was in the case of the heathen; for God's people knew better. It was necessary for them to turn their back upon the God who had redeemed them from Egyptian slavery, and give themselves to idols; or, to change the figure, they had to forsake their marriage vow, and become avowed adulterers. They forsook Jehovah and gave their devotion to that which could neither benefit nor save them. Jeremiah saw Jerusalem as a city of hypocrites, whose outward lives denied the religious professions which were upon their lips. He did not say that there was a lack of outward religion, but rather that Jerusalem presented the

picture of a "church-going" city, but with a glaring contradiction between its profession and its practice.

And what makes the matter more distressing is the fact that the same situation often prevails today.

### The Golden Text

*"Stand ye the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way; and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."* The imagery of the text just quoted is that of travellers who are on their way to a certain destination, but who have either lost their way, or have reached the place where the road forks and where a decision must be made before any further progress can be achieved. It was at such a time as this, or amid such confusion, that someone saw their plight and suggested to them that which they should do. But it sometimes happens that people who are in need of the right kind of advice are not willing to accept it. (Read the last part of the verse from which the golden text is taken.) The lesson before us today is, of course, a moral one, and has to do with travellers on the way of life who are confused, or who do not know which road to take. Jehovah is always ready and willing to direct people into the right way; but, as already indicated, not every one is willing to heed his instruction. The contrast between man's lost and hopeless condition, and God's love and mercy toward him, is to be found on almost every page of the Bible. The Lord does not want anyone to be lost, and he has made ample provision for the salvation of all men. (Cf. 1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9; Heb. 2: 9.)

The plural "paths" does not suggest that there are many ways to heaven; for it is in these paths that the "good way" is to be found. The *old paths* are those in which God's people have always walked, such as faith, love, and obedience. Another Old Testament prophet stated the matter in this way: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good;

and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Mic. 6: 8.) The term "stand" implies that the travellers were to *stop* in the midst of the ways they were traversing, while "see" indicates that they were to take into consideration the conditions in which they were at the time the message was spoken to them. No one is prepared to accept the mercy of God who does not realize his lost and undone condition. (Cf. Acts 2: 14-37.) Notwithstanding man's lost and helpless condition, he still has a responsibility in the sight of God, namely, (1) he must *ask* for the old paths, where is the good way; and (2) he must *walk* therein.

To ask for the old paths is to show a willingness and a determination to please God. Such an attitude has always been true of people who realize their lost state, and who want to be pleased God. (Cf. Acts 22: 10.) To walk in the good way means complete obedience to the gospel plan of salvation; for it is only in the gospel that the good way is to be found. (See Rom. 1: 16, 17; Acts 2: 38-42.) "And ye shall find rest for your souls" has always been the Lord's gracious promise to those who love and serve him; and no one can read this promise without thinking of a similar one made by Jesus. (See Matt. 11: 28-30.) The rest which is promised to them who walk in the *good way* is no mere outward repose. It is rest to the heart, or, which is the same thing, the mind, the affections, the will, and the conscience. How great is the difference between the *memory* of the past and *power* of the present, when people do as God directs, (cf. 1 Tim. 1: 15, 16; 2 Tim 1: 12; 4: 6-8.)

### The Text Explained

The Call to Repentance

(Jer. 7: 1-4)

*The word that came to Jeremiah, from Jehovah, saying, Stand in the gate of Jehovah's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear*

*the word of Jehovah, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship Jehovah. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Trust ye not in lying words, saying,*



*The temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah, are these.*

Jeremiah not only had a general commission to prophesy, he was also given specific messages to deliver, as the times and circumstances demanded. In calling him to his work, Jehovah said, "To whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak." (Jer. 1: 7.) This is a lesson which we should all learn today. Not only are we to preach the gospel, generally speaking, but we must deal with specific cases. In the first ten verses of Tit. 2, Paul instructed that evangelist to address himself to five different classes, namely, (1) aged men; (2) aged women; (3) young women; (4) younger men; and (5) servants. His general theme was that which befits the sound doctrine; and he was then to make the needed application to each of five classes mentioned. We should endeavor to make disciples of those who are out of Christ, baptize them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; and then teach them to observe all that which Christ commands for his followers. (See Matt. 28: 19, 20.)

Even during the idolatrous practices of the people of Judah, they usually kept up some form of public worship; but in as much as Josiah had, more or less, compelled the citizens of his realm to abandon their corrupt worship, it is possible that they were at least going through a form of worshipping Jehovah. But at any rate, Jeremiah was told to stand in the gate of Jehovah's house where the people, as they entered the temple or passed out, would be most likely to hear that which he had to say. His message, in the opinion of Matthew Henry, would "affront the priests, and expose the prophets to their rage, to have such a message as this delivered within their precincts; but the prophet must not fear the face of man, he cannot be faithful to God, if he does." Jeremiah's message was to be delivered to the people who came for worship: and *since* all the males were required to go to Jerusalem three times in the year, it is not improbable that this was during one of their national feasts.

The message which Jeremiah was to deliver was to be given in the

name of Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel. Such an introduction should have challenged the attention of every person who heard the prophet speak; but there is no reason for thinking that they had any greater obligation in that respect than we have today. When God's word is proclaimed to us, that is God Almighty speaking to us; and our responsibility is tremendous. Jehovah said through Isaiah that he will look toward "him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word." (Isa. 66: 2.) How many people, even among Christians, tremble when God's word is spoken! There are many professed Christians who do not hesitate to ignore or set aside that which God says, if it does not please them; and there are not a few who are so bold as to try to get the preacher fired, if he goes against their wishes, even in speaking that which God has specifically commanded. Old Felix was about as corrupt as he could be, but when Paul preached a sermon in his presence in which he condemned his scandalous and ungodly life, Luke says that "Felix was terrified," and the implication is that he dismissed Paul from his presence with becoming respect. To say the least of it, he showed a much better spirit than some brethren do today, who do not like that which the preacher says, even if it is that which he is under obligation to preach.

The fact that God was calling the people of Judah to repentance was further evidence of his goodness and mercy toward them; he was willing to give them another chance, in spite of their continued unfaithfulness toward their marriage vow. (Cf. Rom. 2: 4.) If, as some Bible students think, this address was delivered by Jeremiah in the beginning of Jehoiaxim's reign then we can probably get a better understanding of the situation. The reforms of Josiah, which apparently were never genuine so far as the people were concerned, were cut short by his untimely death at the hands of Pharaoh-necoh. After the burial of Josiah, the people made his son Jehoahaz king; but he was removed by the king of Egypt after a reign of three months, and his brother Jehoiaxim was elevated to the throne. Both of these kings were exceedingly corrupt, with the result

that evil again had a free hand. However, it appears that the people still maintained a form of temple-worship.

The Jews seemingly thought that because their temple had been chosen by Jehovah as his peculiar dwelling-place, it could never be destroyed. There are many people, even today, who still think that ceremonial observances will supersede the need of holy living. (Cf. Isa. 48: 1, 2; Mic. 3: 11; Acts 5: 1-11.) Adam Clarke says concerning verse 4 of the text now under consideration that "in the *Chaldee* the passage stands thus: 'Do not trust in the words of lying prophets, which say, before the temple of the Lord ye shall worship; before the temple of the Lord ye shall sacrifice; before the temple of the Lord ye shall adore; thrice in the year ye shall appear before it.' This the Targumist supposes to have been the reason why the words here are *thrice repeated*. They rather seem to express the conviction which the people had, that they should be safe while their temple service continued; for they supposed that God would not give it up into profane hands. But *sacred places* and *sacred symbols* are nothing in the sight of God when the heart is not right with him."

#### God's Gracious Promise (Jer. 7: 5-7)

*For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute justice between a man and his neighbor; if ye oppress not the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your own hurt: then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, from of old even for evermore.*

Although Jehovah showed his mercy toward his people in that he gave them the opportunity to repent, and with it a further claim on his blessings, yet he made it clear to them that their repentance must be genuine. God will not accept halfhearted work, and semblances of piety cannot deceive him; and what was true then is just as true now: the Lord will not look with favor upon anything which is short of a thorough reformation. This solemn

fact should furnish an occasion for serious meditation on our part today. There is no reason for a man to hope to please God, so long as he mistreats his fellow man. And it should be carefully noted that positive violations of justice and mercy are not necessary under Christ, in order for one to be guilty of the sin which is here condemned. (See 1 John 3: 13-18; 4: 20, 21.)

Sometimes we feel that we are not under the same obligation to those who are not so close to us, or who may be regarded as being outside of our acquaintance or fellowship, as we are to those among whom we have lived all of our lives. But if we will only stop and think, we will be able to see that our treatment of strangers is usually a pretty good index to what is in our hearts. (Cf. Heb. 13: 2.) Jehovah was very strict with his people regarding their attitude toward strangers, the fatherless, and the widows; and we may be sure that he is no less concerned about such people today. The widows and orphans are usually regarded as being more or less helpless and at the mercy of others; and no one can be a Christian, in the true sense of that term, and take advantage or refuse consideration for them. Christ gave us a rule to govern our lives (Matt. 7: 12), and when we see to it that we live according to its principle, no one will be harmed or mistreated by us. Any violation of this principle, along with devotion to any other god is really to our own hurt; and we may be sure that God will take such matters into account when he comes to deal with us. (Cf. Prov. 8: 36.)

Jehovah had given the land of Canaan to the fathers of the people to whom Jeremiah spoke, but he had carefully warned them that if they refused to obey him, he would remove them into the land of their enemies. (Head Deut. 30: 1-20.) The warning which was given to Israel at the beginning had been frequently repeated throughout their history; and not only was that true, but their brethren to the north of them, that is, the kingdom of Israel, had actually been taken away by the Assyrians. Thus, Judah had both the precept and the example, but, as we shall see later, they had to suffer a captivity in a foreign land before they were cured of their idolatry. This lesson

cannot be too strongly impressed upon us today.

### Wickedness and Idolatry Denounced (Jer. 7: 8-11)

*Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods that ye have not known, and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered; that ye may do all these abominations?. Is this house which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I even I, have seen it, saith Jehovah.*

The "lying words" in which the people of Judah trusted were evidently the words of false prophets. Such words could not profit them in any way, and neither would they in any way be blessed by keeping them. When will mankind learn that there is no way to please God, other than the one which is set forth in the gospel. (Cf. Gal. 1: 6-9.) A lie is the direct opposite of the truth; and anything therefore which is antithetical to the truth is, of course, a lie. God's way of salvation is contained in the gospel (Rom. 1: 16, 17), and any preaching which is contrary to the gospel plan is, in its very nature, a lie. (Cf. Rom. 1: 25; 2 Thess. 2: 8-12; 1 John 1: 6; 2: 2: 21, 27, and marginal note.)

Several of the sins of which the people to whom Jeremiah spoke were guilty are mentioned in the text now before us. These were all horrible crimes, and yet those who committed them pretended to worship Jehovah! But that pretense only resulted in their own hurt, and the defilement of the house which was called by Jehovah's name. The fact that they did not know the gods which they were following served only to aggravate their crime. (Read the letters to the angels of the churches in Pergamum and Thyatira, Rev. 2: 12-29; 1 Cor. 6: 12-20.) It seems almost impossible that religious people could be guilty of such sins, to say nothing of having the effrontery to enter the Lord's house, pretend to worship him, and to say "We are delivered!" And yet, it is sad to say that such conditions actually exist today. The fact that one is recognized as being a mem-

ber of the church does not necessarily mean that he is pleasing to the Lord. (Cf. 2 Thess. 3: 6, 14, 15; Rom. 13: 11-14.)

In commenting on Jer. 26: 1, Bewer says that "this chapter gives the date (608 B.C.) and the historical framework of the temple address of ch. 7." This is also the view of other Bible students. (See Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown; The Interpreter's Bible; cf. Adam Clarke.) The reaction to Jeremiah's sermon which we have been studying, if the view just stated is correct, may be seen by reading Jer. 26: 8, 9. "And it came to pass when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that Jehovah had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold on him, saying, Thou shalt surely die. Why hast thou prophesied in the name of Jehovah, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant? And all the people were gathered unto Jeremiah in the house of Jehovah." (Read all of chapters 7 and 26.)

There are some members of the church today, as was pointed out earlier in this lesson, who stoutly oppose any teacher of God's word who dares to rebuke professed Christians for their sins—some of them almost too shameful to mention in a public assembly. It is doubtful if any preacher in the church today could condemn a single sin of which professed Christians can be guilty, and not meet with opposition in some way from those who claim membership in the body of Christ. In some instances they will not only oppose what the preacher says, but will endeavor to find something wrong with his character, or some mistake he has made, and then cunningly bring that forward in an attempt to weaken or counteract that which he has said.

Jehovah's question in verse 11 may be paraphrased in these words: "Do you regard my house as being a common den of robbers, that is, an asylum wherein you may obtain protection for your abominations?" Jesus quoted from this passage when he cleansed the temple, just before his crucifixion. (See Matt. 21: 13.) Jehovah, however, assured the people that he had seen that which they had done to his house, that is, that

they treated it as if it were a den of robbers; and having seen it, of course,

implied that punishment was sure to follow, if they did not repent.

## 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 great responsibility which the prophetic office placed upon Jeremiah?

Discuss his special fitness for his work.

What methods were employed in trying to get the people to realize their sins?

Why was the sin of idolatry greater in Israel than in other nations?

What is the relevancy of this lesson to our day?

### The Golden Text

Upon what imagery is the lesson of the golden text based?

What moral application does it have for our time?

What was meant by asking for the "old paths"?

What do the words "stand" and "see" imply?

Where is the "good way" to be found?

What responsibility do lost people have with respect to their salvation?

What "rest" does the Lord promise to those who seek him?

### The Call to Repentance

What specific obligation did Jeremiah have as a prophet?

What does the New Testament teach with reference to specific duties of preachers today?

What was the religious condition of the people to whom Jeremiah was sent?

Where was he to deliver his address?

What is implied in speaking in the name of the Lord?

How does God expect people to react to his word?

What special lesson do we learn from Felix in this respect?

What was implied in Jehovah's calling Judah to repentance?

At what time in Judah's history was this address probably delivered?

How did the people of that day regard the temple of the Lord?

### God's Gracious Promise

What did Jehovah require of the people in Jeremiah's time before he would bless them?

Why won't God accept halfhearted service from his people?

What relationship exists between one's attitude toward others and the guilt of sin?

How does God expect his people to treat those who are in need?

What rule should all Christians follow and what will always happen if that is done?

Under what conditions did God promise to give the land to his people in Jeremiah's day?

### Wickedness and Idolatry Denounced

In what "lying words" did the people of Judah trust?

What is a "lie" in relation to the *truth*?

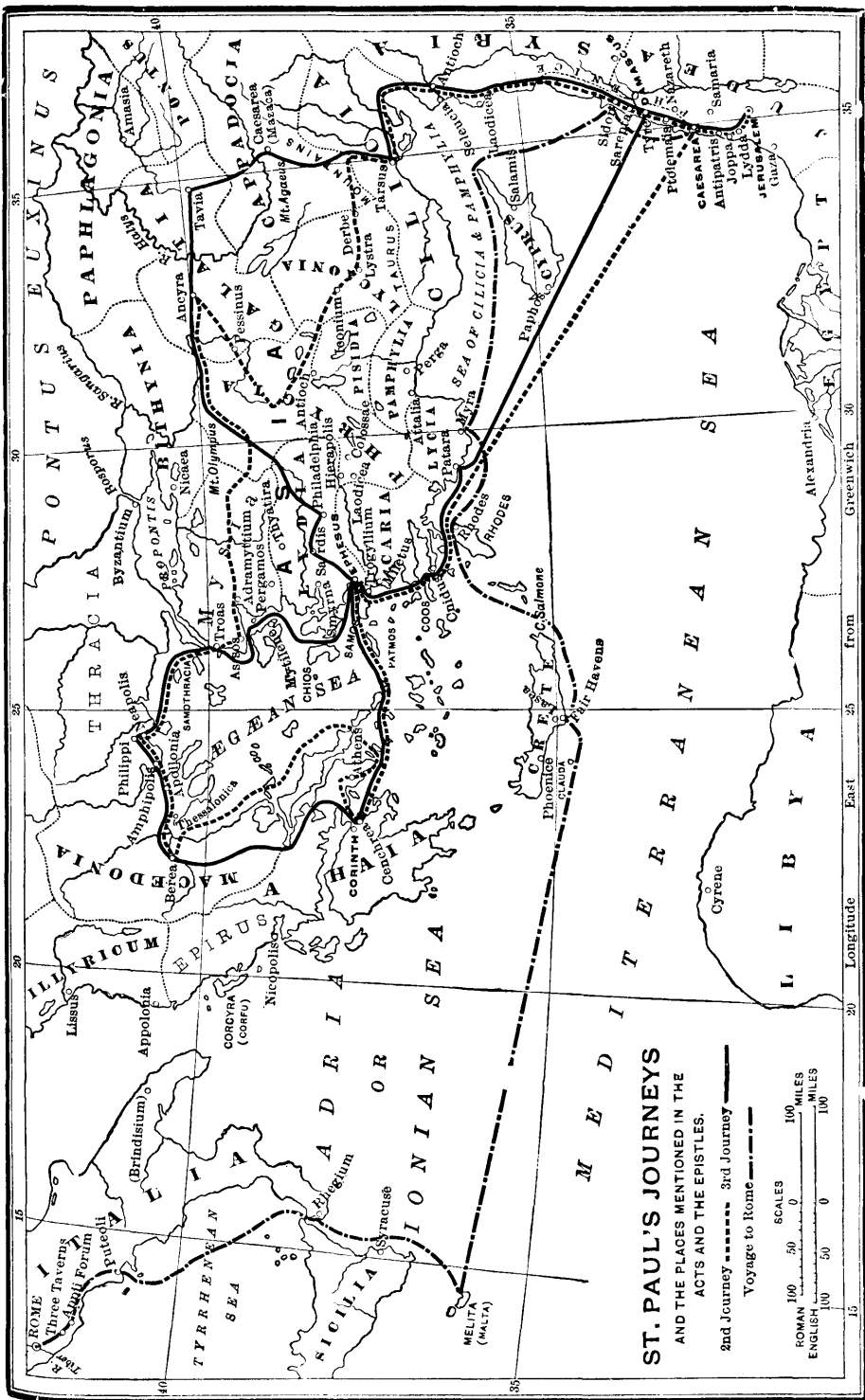
How can people bring themselves to trust in their church membership to save them while engaging in flagrant sins? Discuss freely.

How did the people react to Jeremiah's address?

How do you explain the attitude of some brethren in condemning preachers for rebuking sin?

What methods do these objectors often employ in their opposition to faithful preachers of God's word?

How did God say they were treating his house and what did that mean?



# ST. PAUL'S JOURNEYS

AND THE PLACES MENTIONED IN THE ACTS AND THE EPISTLES.

2nd Journey ----- 3rd Journey . . . . .  
 Voyage to Rome -----



## SECOND QUARTER

### SELECTIONS FROM PAUL'S PRISON EPISTLES

*AIM.—To acquaint ourselves with the Epistles Paul wrote while a prisoner of the Romans, and to learn well the lessons of faithfulness and fidelity, sacrifice and selflessness which these inspired writings of the great apostle contain.*

Lesson I—April 5, 1964

### PAUL, THE PRISONER

#### Lesson Text

Eph. 6: 18-20; Phil. 1: 12-14; Col. 4: 7-9, 18

18 With all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints,

19 And on my behalf, that utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,

20 For which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

12 Now I would have you know, brethren, that the things *which happened* unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel;

13 So that my bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole prae-to'-ri-an guard, and to all the rest;

14 And that most of the brethren

in the Lord, being confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear.

7 All my affairs shall Tych'i-cus make known unto you, the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord:

8 Whom I have sent unto you for this very purpose, that ye may know our state, and that he may comfort your hearts;

9 Together with O-nes'i-mius, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things that *are done* here.

18 The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you.

Golden Text.—“*Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus.*” (Eph. 3: 1.)

Devotional Reading.—2 Tim. 4: 1-9.

#### Daily Bible Readings

March 30. M.....	Paul's Sufferings for Christ (2 Cor. 11: 22-28)
March 31. T.....	Fellowship in Suffering (Phil. 3: 1-16)
April 1. W.....	Save Life by Losing It (Matt. 16: 21-28)
April 2. T.....	A Cross to Bear (Luke 14: 25-35)
April 3. F.....	Joyful in the Face of Trial (2 Cor. 7: 1-7)
April 4. S.....	Devil Cast Some Into Prison (Rev. 2: 1-10)
April 5. S.....	Examples of Suffering (Heb. 11: 32-40)

TIME.—Ephesians and Colossians, A.D. 62; Philippians, A.D. 63 or 64.

PLACE.—Rome.

PERSONS.—Paul and the brethren to whom he wrote.

#### Introduction

In one of Paul's letters to the Corinthians, he used these words: “in prisons more abundantly.” This was not a meaningless expression; for it is a recorded fact that the apostle to the Gentiles was frequently within prison walls. That, however, was

not the result of any wrongdoing on his part, but it came as a consequence of his determination to be loyal to Christ at all costs. 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. In writing to the Romans, Paul said, "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.) And then to Timothy he said. "Be not ashamed therefore of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but suffer hardship with the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Tim. 1: 8), and "suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2: 3).

The philosophy of suffering for Christ's sake may be learned from such passages as the following: "If the world hateth you, ye know that it hath hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, A servant is not greater than his Lord. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me." (John 15: 18-21.) Christ and the world were diametrically op-

posed to each other, and that made a conflict between them inevitable.

That which has just been said should be enough to *convince* any thoughtful person that no one can follow Christ, in the true meaning of that expression, without coming into conflict with the world. Paul's long experience as a faithful follower of Christ fully confirmed this truth, and he sought to impress its significance upon Timothy, just before the apostle left his son in an unfriendly world, as he was about to go to be with Jesus. He reminded Timothy that times would not get better, but that "evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." He also told him that "all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (Read 2 Tim. 3: 1-13.) But Paul never taught any truth which he was unwilling to apply to himself, and he never urged anyone to make a sacrifice or suffer for a cause while at the same time being unwilling to do so himself. And, consequently, we are not surprised to hear him say, "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ with eternal story." (2 Tim. 2: 10.)

### The Golden Text

"Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus." The Roman imprisonment during which Paul wrote the letters, which are usually referred to as the prison epistles, that is, Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, and Philippians, is generally thought of as his first incarceration in the Imperial City. However, it is only fair to say that there are some Bible students who think that the apostle was imprisoned in Rome only one time. But the weight of authority appears to favor two imprisonments there. The chief sources of authority regarding this question are (1) the testimony of some of the early Christian writers — Clement, Eusebius, Chrysostom, Jerome, and the Muratorian Canon; and (2) the pastoral epistles — First Timothy, Titus, and Second Timothy, written in this order.

The facts concerning Paul's first Roman imprisonment are clearly and fully set down in the Book of Acts. He had just completed his third great missionary journey, and was on his

way, with some other brethren (cf. 1 Cor. 16: 3, 4), to take the contribution which had been raised for the poor saints to Jerusalem, when the prediction was made regarding his forthcoming incarceration in the Jewish Capital. (Acts 21: 7-14.) It was not long after he reached the city before he was arrested; and he was held in bonds in Jerusalem, Caesarea, and Rome for the next four years. (Acts 24: 27; 28: 30.) The facts seem to indicate that the apostle was released from his first Roman imprisonment, and was free for some four or five years, before he was again arrested and transferred to the Roman prison from which he was sent to his death.

As already pointed out, the four epistles which are generally referred to as the prison epistles were written during the Roman imprisonment of Acts 28. When these four epistles are carefully studied, it will be seen there is a very close relationship among three of them, namely, Phile-

mon, Colossians, and Ephesians. When Philemon (especially verses 10-12) is read along with Colossians (especially 4: 7-9), it will appear at once that both letters were sent by Paul at the same time by the same carrier; and when Col. 4: 7 is considered in connection with Eph. 6: 21, it will further be seen that these two letters were joined together, because Tychicus is mentioned as accompanying each one. But with Philip-

pian the situation is different. With the exception of Paul's bonds (Phil. 1: 13, 17), nothing is found in this epistle regarding the marks of identity which are common to the other three. The only reason for putting them together is due to the fact that they were all written during the same period of imprisonment; although it appears that Philippians was written a year or so after the others.

## The Text Explained

### Prayer and Supplication Enjoined

(Eph. 6: 18-20)

*With all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints, and on my behalf, that utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*

One has only to glance at the paragraph from which this section of the lesson text is taken, in order to see that the passage which we are now to consider is a part of Paul's entire statement regarding the Christian soldier. The Christian warrior may have on the armor which God has authorized for him, and fully equipped with the weapons which have been provided for him; but he can succeed in his struggle against his foes, only as he continues in prayer, beseeching the help of God. No isolated Christian can maintain his spiritual strength very long; he must have the fellowship which God has ordained for his people, if he is to continue the fight. (Cf. Acts 2: 42; 1 John 1: 6, 7.)

The terms "prayer" and "supplication" do not indicate two different kinds of praying. As used here, prayer appears to be general, while supplication is specific. Or, to state the same thing in a different way, *prayer* covers the entire ground of our communion with God, while *supplication* has reference to the special things for which we make request. As pointed out in the preceding paragraph, the exhortations of verse 18 contain a further explanation of the manner in which the Christian soldier is to succeed in his conflict with

evil. The great requirement of standing firm and ready for the combat can be made good only when prayer—constant and earnest and spiritual prayer is added to the equipment already mentioned. Prayer and watchfulness must be combined, and every phase of prayer, as Williams observes, must be used to rout the enemy. To pray in the Spirit is to pray in the realm or sphere of the Spirit, as he directs and depending upon him for his help. (Cf. Rom. 8: 26, 27.) The words "watching" and "perseverance" are military terms, and their practical meaning is that we must never allow ourselves to be caught off guard.

In answering the question, Why should one pray? The Speaker's Bible notes that a praying warrior receives into his soul the grace-energies of the eternal God. The power of grace is the love, strength, and beauty of the never-failing Father flowing into the needs of the soul, and filling them with his own completeness. Thus, we do not pray in order to make God willing to impart this grace, but in order to fit ourselves to receive it. We do not pray to ingratiate God's good will, but to open our souls in hospitality. We do not pray in order to create a friendly air, but to let it in, so that we may appropriate that which God has for us. We do not pray to turn a reluctant God toward us, but to turn our reluctant selves toward a ready and bountiful Father. (Ephesians, p. 433.)

The continuous alertness of the Christian must manifest itself in behalf of his comrades in the warfare; for if even one soldier falters, the army of righteousness is weakened to that extent. And it was in this connection that Paul the prisoner



made a special request for himself. His inspiration made known God's will regarding mankind, and what he himself should do about their salvation; but he realized his own human limitations and asked the prayers of the brethren, to the end that he might have the strength and the courage to do his duty. In being confronted with the danger of persecution, further imprisonment, and death, Paul knew that his courage was being put to a severe test. In commenting on this request by the apostle, Lipscomb says, ("A lack of courage to speak at all times the full truth of God was one of the besetting sins of the early preachers. No more courageous man ever lived than Paul; yet he felt that there was danger that he might fail to speak the whole truth of God to the world, and prayed, and asked others to pray for him, that he might have the courage to preach it faithfully. If one of such natural courage as he felt such danger and the necessity for praying for courage, how much more should we poor mortals feel the need of following his example! Our courage is not now tested exactly in the same way his was; but it is none the less fully tested, and we need the courage to do our full duty to God and man.")

#### Paul's Situation As a Prisoner and Its Effect

(Phil. 1: 12-14)

*But I would have you know, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel; so that my bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole praetorian guard, and to all the rest; and that most of the brethren in the Lord, being confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear.*

We know that it was necessary for Christ to suffer, in order that he might save the world; and in a similar manner, it is frequently essential for those who would carry the gospel message to others to suffer, if they are to reach them with the truth. The very fact that Paul was in prison gave him an opportunity to talk to others who were there, and his conduct was such as to cause the entire guard to take notice of him, that is, favorable notice. Paul's experience

with the jailor, during his first visit to Philippi, is a splendid example of the influence which a Christian prisoner may have upon them who are responsible for keeping him in custody. Instead of complaining at their lot, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns unto God, and the prisoners were listening to them. That kind of attitude and conduct is bound to have its effect for good, and it will surely result in much better soil for the sowing of the seed of the truth. The "praetorian guard" was the *imperial guard*; and they recognized that Paul was a prisoner for Christ's sake, which no doubt caused them to want to know something about him. (Cf. Phil. 4: 22.)

When Paul wrote to the Romans he said, "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." (Rom. 8: 28.) No better commentary can be found on this statement than Paul's experience in the Roman prison. He was there suffering for the sake of the gospel, but that suffering, which was only for the moment, resulted in others learning and obeying the truth. It would have been impossible for Paul as a free man to go among those people with the gospel message; but he could radiate the truth while he was in the prison. God never puts more upon his people than they can bear, but he does use them in reaching those who cannot be reached in any other way except by persecution and imprisonment.

The section of the lesson text which we are now considering has been called the conquest of limitation. Paul was in bonds, but his spirit was free. In the words of Richard Lovelace, "Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage," at least, they do not imprison the soul and render a godly life impotent. This kind of a situation gives the man of faith some of his greatest opportunities. John Bunyan was imprisoned because he refused to conform to the State's idea of preaching, but that did not keep him from writing *The Pilgrim's Progress*; instead, it gave him the incentive and the opportunity. Even the brethren in Paul's day at Rome, "being confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear." If brethren would learn to exercise

their faith, when trials come upon them, instead of complaining and criticizing others, the purpose of God would be better served, and countless souls would be led to Christ.

In the words of another, "What is the task of faith in this world? Not so much to explain as to overcome! Faith does not set out to give us a clear-cut explanation of the why and the wherefore of things; it is the spirit which goes out into the midst of inexplicable things to shape them after its own fashion. Faith is a life, not a scheme. Ultimately in this great business of human life mystery broods over the face of things, explanations are withheld, and the whole issue comes to this, whether we are going to wrest out of life's problems some gain which can never be lost. The man of faith does not know more about the meaning of life's problems than any of his fellows, he is not in possession of the key to the puzzle, but he has himself the spirit which challenges life to give up its hidden riches." (Edward Hastings: *The Speaker's Bible—Philippians and Colossians*, p. 29.

### **A Personal Message, Salutation, and Benediction**

(Col. 4: 7-9, 18)

*All my affairs shall Tychicus make known unto you, the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord: whom I have sent you for this very purpose, that ye may know our state, and that he may comfort your hearts; together with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things that are done here.*

Tychicus appears to have been a native of the province of Asia who, along with Trophimus, accompanied Paul on his journey following the uproar in Ephesus. (Acts 20: 1-4.) He was evidently under consideration to assist Titus in Crete (Tit. 3: 12), but was subsequently sent by Paul to Ephesus (2 Tim. 4: 12). We do not know how he came to be in Rome at the time of Paul's writing the three of his prison epistles, but it was he who was charged with taking them to their respective destinations. Onesimus was a slave who belonged to Philemon, but who left his master and had made his way to Rome; and

while there he was converted to Christ by Paul. It would have pleased the apostle if Onesimus could have remained with him, so that he might minister unto him in the bonds of the gospel; but he knew that his new son in the faith, in fulfillment of his Christian duty, must return to his master and make things right with him. Paul, accordingly, sent Onesimus back to Colossae, evidently in company with and under the escort Tychicus, who carried the letter which the apostle had written to Philemon.

Although Paul was in prison, he felt it his duty to comfort the hearts of the brethren in Colossae; and he had charged Tychicus and Onesimus with that responsibility. The Colossian brethren, of course, would be distressed because of Paul's imprisonment in Rome; but from the nature and contents of the letter which he wrote to them, it is easy to see that the conditions at home would also make the need for encouragement real. Regardless of where the apostle Paul may have been, or under what circumstances he had to live, he was always both willing and happy to do what he could to encourage and help others. This was true even in the final days of his life, as may be seen by reading 2 Timothy, which was evidently written a short time before his death, and while he was lingering in a musty dungeon.

*The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you.* We learn from the second Thessalonian letter that Paul made it a custom to autograph all of his letters personally. "The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write." (2 Thess. 3: 17.) The request to "remember my bonds," was significant. It was but natural for his bonds to hinder his work, even his writing; but if his friends remembered that he was bound, they would understand, and would realize that he was not free to do as he would like. And, too, they could and would pray for him.

While relatively few today are called upon to suffer as Paul did, yet it is true that we all have bonds to some extent, and need encouragement. Sometimes we say that we could have done better, had it not been for some unavoidable and dis-

turbing influence which hindered us. But if we will study the prison-life of Paul, it altogether possible that we will be able to find that we can do many things under trying circumstances, which we thought impossible. Paul found his greatest joy and his most successful work when conditions, as viewed from the worldly mind, seemed the most unfavorable. "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. 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." (2 Cor. 12: 7-10.)

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Why was the apostle Paul in prison so often?  
How did he look upon such treatment?  
Why did he encourage others to follow in his footsteps with reference to these things?  
What is the Christian philosophy of suffering for Christ's sake?  
Why will those who live godly in Christ Jesus suffer persecutions?  
Why was Paul willing to suffer so much in his service to the Lord?

### The Golden Text

From what prison did Paul write his "prison letters"?  
Which of his letters are so called?  
Relate the facts which led to his first Roman imprisonment.  
Discuss the relationship which the prison epistles sustain to each other.

### Prayer and Supplication Enjoined

Discuss the setting of this section of the lesson text.  
Why is prayer so essential to the Christian soldier?  
What is meant by "prayer" and "supplication"?  
What does it mean to pray "in the Spirit"?  
What is the significance of the terms "watching" and "perseverance"?  
Give some basic reasons for saying that the Christian should continue in prayer.  
What is the value of intercessory prayer?  
For whom should Christians pray?

Why do preachers need the prayers of their fellow Christians?

### Paul's Situation As a Prisoner and Its Effect

What are some of the advantages which came out of Paul's life in prison?  
Discuss an example of this kind of influence.  
What was the "praetorian guard"?  
Show how Paul's prison life illustrated the truth set forth in Rom. 8: 28.  
What is meant when we speak of this section of the lesson text as "the conquest of limitation"?  
Show that such is the truth.  
What is the great task of faith?

### A Personal Message, Salutation, and Benediction

Who was Tychicus and what do we know about him?  
What is known of Onesimus and why did he accompany Tychicus?  
Why didn't Paul keep him in Rome and simply send Philemon word regarding his change in life?  
Why did Paul send the Colossians this personal message?  
What comfort did the Colossians need?  
What lesson do we learn from Paul's attitude in this respect?  
In what way did Paul close all of his letters?  
Why did he ask the Colossians to remember his bonds?  
Show that all people today are more or less in bonds.  
What should our attitude be toward all these things?  
What was Paul's philosophy with reference to his relationship to Christ?

## Lesson II—April 12, 1964

## REDEEMING THE TIME

### Lesson Text

Eph. 5: 3-16

3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as becometh saints;

4 Nor filthiness, nor foolish talking, or jesting, which are not befitting; but rather giving of thanks.

5 For this ye know of a surety,

that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

6 Let no man deceive you with empty words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience.

7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them;

8 For ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord: walk as children of light

9 (For the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth),

10 Proving what is well-pleasing unto the Lord;

11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them;

12 For the things which are done by them in secret it is a shame even to speak of.

13 But all things when they are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for everything that is made manifest is light.

14 Wherefore *he* saith, Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee.

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

16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"To-day if ye shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts."* (Heb. 4: 7.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Isa. 28: 1-7.

### Daily Bible Readings

April 6. M.....	Must Use Present Opportunity (Eccles. 9: 1-10)
April 7. T.....	Time Passes Rapidly (Rom. 13: 8-14)
April 8. W.....	Our Life Is a Vapor (James 4: 13-17)
April 9. T.....	Foolish Virgins (Matt. 25: 1-13)
April 10. F.....	Careless Steward (Luke 12: 41-48)
April 11. S.....	Barren Fig Tree (Luke 13: 6-9)
April 12. S.....	Opportunity Lost (Luke 13: 22-30)

TIME.—A.D. 62.

PLACE.—Rome.

PERSONS.—Paul and the brethren to whom he wrote.

### Introduction

The primary value of time, so far as we are concerned, is with reference to the true meaning of human life. Moses, in one of the oldest psalms in the Old Testament collection, called upon God in these words, "So teach us to number our days, that we may get us a heart of wisdom." (Psalm 90: 12.) This was the prayer of a man who was fully aware of the mortality of the human race, and he knew that the truth which he uttered must be recognized and dealt with properly, if the right kind of life is to be lived. It was John Foster who said, "Keep forever in view the momentous value of life; aim at its worthiest use—its sublimest end; spurn, with disdain, those foolish trifles and frivolous vanities which so often consume life, as the locusts did Egypt; and devote yourself, with the ardor of a passion, to attain the most divine improvements of the human soul. In short, hold yourself in preparation to make the transition to

another life, whenever you shall be claimed by the Lord of the world."

If we ask ourselves, In what sense should our days be numbered? the correct answer will depend upon the true meaning of the life we now live. Too many of us look to the harvest we hope to reap here, instead of regarding our pilgrimage as a time of sowing. This life should be reckoned as an opportunity to get started in the right way, to become familiar with the law of the Lord, to get initiated, as it were, into the holy mysteries of true existence, and to become rooted for eternal growth in the world to come. Moffatt translates the request of Moses in these words: "O teach us so to count our days, that we may take it to heart." This "wise enumeration of time" is not for the purpose of determining how many days we have to live, if we are permitted to go the full measure; but rather to enable us to consider our

time in relation to the work which should be done.

There would be no point in considering the time which we have at our disposal, if there were no purpose in mind. Objectless meditation and concern regarding the great issues of life, with no resolutions in mind, will avail nothing. The prayer of the psalmist was "that we may get us a heart of wisdom," or, as Moffatt has it, "that we may take it to heart." The practical meaning of this is that we may act wisely with reference to the time which is allotted to us. This is a most important consideration;

for, as Milton says, "hours have wings and fly up to the author of time and carry news of our visage. All our prayers cannot entreat one of them either to return or slacken its pace. The misspents of every minute are a new record against us in heaven. Surely if we thought thus we would dismiss them with better reports, and not suffer them to fly away empty, or laden with dangerous intelligence. How happy is it when they carry up not only the message but the fruits of good, and stay with the Ancient of Days to speak for us before his glorious throne."

### The Golden Text

*"To-day if ye shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts."* The Wise Man of the Old Testament was not speaking in vain when he said, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." (Prov. 4: 23.) Just as the physical heart is the center of our physical being, so is the heart mentioned in the passage just quoted the center of our moral and spiritual being. The heart of the Bible consists of the intellect, the feelings or sensibilities, the will power, and the conscience, all of which must be diligently guarded, if we are to be pleasing to God. This, of course, means that our thinking, reasoning, understanding, and believing must be correct; we will feel as we should, if we are correctly informed and are conscious of the fact that we are doing that which is right; our will power is brought into focus when we are determined to follow after righteousness; and our conscience is clear or pure when we know that we have done that which is expected of us. If these processes are followed, our hearts will never become hardened.

It is only by hearing that which the Lord has spoken, that we know what to do; and it is then up to us as to whether or not our hearts will be acceptable to him. If we listen to the voice of the evil one, or decline to do that which the Lord commands, the result will be fatal, if that course is continued. The writer of Hebrews expresses the matter in these words: "Take heed, brethren, lest haply

there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God: 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: for we are become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end: while it is said.

To-day if ye shall hear his voice,  
Harden not your hearts, as in the  
provocation."

The writer of the Hebrew letter then goes on to identify those of the provocation, that is, those who provoked Jehovah, namely, "all they that came out of Egypt by Moses," and who were disobedient to the voice of the Lord; and his conclusion was, "And we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief." (See Heb. 3: 12-19.) The inspired writer then makes this application: "Let us fear therefore, lest haply, a promise being left of entering into his rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good tidings preached unto us, even as also they: but the word of hearing did not profit them, because it was not united by faith with them that heard." (Heb. 4: 1, 2.) Unbelief and disobedience kept the Israelites out of Canaan, and the same conditions will keep the people of this age out of heaven; and it is for this reason that Paul exhorts us all, saying,

To-day if ye shall hear his voice,  
Harden not your hearts.

## The Text Explained

### Specific Warnings against the Common Sins of the Day

(Eph. 5: 3-6)

*But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as becometh saints; nor filthiness, nor foolish talking, or jesting, which are not befitting; but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know of a surety, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no man deceive you with empty words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience.*

It is quite evident that Paul is here contrasting the immoral life of pagans with the righteous conduct which God requires of his people. It is clear, both from the Bible and history, that fornication and similar uncleanness were freely and openly practiced among the heathen. The unnatural and perverted indulgence of sex is set forth in such passages of scripture as Gen. 19: 1-11 and Rom. 1: 26ff. In his letter to the angel of the church in Pergamum, the Lord instructed John to say that Balaam "taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication." (Rev. 2: 14; cf. Num. 31: 16; chapters 22-25.) The fornication in question appears to have been a kind of religious rite, or at least in connection with their worship. The motive behind Balaam's teaching was something like this: Balak, I can't curse the people, but I can show you how to get God to curse them, namely, by getting them to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication.

It is clear from the case of the teaching of Balaam, just cited, and from the teaching and seduction of "Jezebel," in the church in Thyatira (Rev. 2: 20f.), that immorality had found its way among the Lord's people. This was also true of the Corinthian church, as may be seen by reading 1 Cor. 6: 12-20. The argument which some of the Corinthians, who were formerly heathen (cf. 1 Cor. 6: 9-11: 12: 1-3), were making was something like this: Meats were created to be eaten, and man was

given the capacity for them; and in a similar way God gave man and woman sexual desires and capacities to be satisfied and indulged. But Paul vigorously denounces this vicious teaching, and categorically denies its truthfulness. There is neither place nor excuse for the sin of fornication among the Lord's people, and those who are guilty of that and other sins of uncleanness shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

If the Lord's people really understood and believed Paul's declaration regarding the sin of covetousness, which he calls idolatry, what a difference it would make in their lives! We encourage the sending of missionaries to foreign lands, in order to try to convert people from idolatry; but what about the idolaters in our midst? When Paul wrote our First Corinthians, he said this, "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." (1 Cor. 5: 9-11.) The "eating" here has reference to a common meal, and not to the Lord's supper; as may be seen from the apostle's remarks regarding those of "this world."

"Filthiness" is obscenity, or that which comes from a foul-mouthed person. (Cf. Eph. 4: 29.) "Foolish talking" is silly speech, which is both foolish and sinful. In commenting on the word for "foolish talking," which is found only here in the New Testament, Trench says, "But words obtain a new earnestness when assumed into the ethical terminology of Christ's school. Nor, in seeking to enter fully into the meaning of this one, ought we to leave out of sight the greater emphasis which the words 'fool,' 'foolish,' 'folly,' obtain in Scripture, than elsewhere they have, or can have. There is the positive of folly as well as the negative to be taken account of, when we are weighing the force of *mōrologia* (foolish talking):

it is that 'talk of fools,' which is foolish and sin together." (Synonyms of the New Testament, p. 120f.) See also that which Jesus says about one's speech. (Matt. 12: 34-37.) "Jesting," also found only here in the New Testament, means, according to Vincent, "*polished and witty speech as the instrument of sin*; refinement and versatility without the flavor of Christian grace." Robertson notes that the term is also used in the "low sense as here ribaldry, scurrility." Paul's evident meaning was not that clean merriment, but "the habit of making a joke of indecency." The apostle's warning in verse 6 was against the specious arguments of some who endeavored to justify the immoral practices which he has just condemned. (See again 1 Cor. 6: 12ff., and the false teaching of Balaam and Jezebel, referred to in Rev. 2.)

### Christians Should Walk As Children of Light

(Eph. 5: 7-14)

*Be not ye therefore partakers with them; for ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord; walk as children of light (for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth), proving what is well-pleasing unto the Lord; and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them; for the things which are done by them in secret it is a shame even to speak of. But all things when they are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for everything that is made manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake, thou a steepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee.*

If the Ephesian epistle is read in the light of the Colossian letter, it will be fairly easy to see that Paul is contrasting paganism with Christianity. There will be more on the false philosophies which were advocated in that area of the world in a future lesson of this quarter. Those who are familiar with the writings of Paul are aware of the fact that he frequently contrasted the present condition of the Lord's people with their past—what they were at the time he wrote to them with what they were before their conversion to Christ. This contrast would have the effect of enhancing and magnify-

ing the glory and blessedness of their redeemed estate in Christ; for they would be able to see their inheritance in the Lord, as they viewed the guilt and the shame and the misery of that which they had left behind, and from which they had been redeemed. In writing the Ephesian letter, Paul used these words: "Wherefore remember, that once ye, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by which is called Circumcision, in the flesh, made by hands; that ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ." (Eph. 2: 11-13.)

Having thus been redeemed from the bondage of sin and uncleanness, the people who have become the Lord's people are under no further obligation to the ways of darkness, but are expected to "walk as children of light." Paul made this same argument when he wrote his letter to the Romans: "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye presented your members as servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, even so now present your members as servants to righteousness unto sanctification. For when ye were servants of sin, ye were free in regard of righteousness. What fruit then had ye at that time in the things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end eternal life. For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 6: 19-23.)

To walk in the light is to bear the fruit of the light, or, to state the same thing in another way, those who walk in the light will bring forth the fruit of the light, which Paul names as "all goodness and righteousness and truth." It appears that "goodness" has reference to the state of the heart, which issues forth in Christian excellence. "Righteousness" signifies that excellence with reference to both God and man; while "truth" denotes the reality of goodness and righteous-

ness. (Cf. 1 John 3: 18.) In urging the Lord's people to walk in the light, or to "walk as children of light," Paul calls upon them to do the following things, namely, (1) prove that which is well-pleasing unto the Lord; (2) have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; and (3) but rather reprove them. The marginal reading for "reprove" is *convict*, and the idea is, according to Arndt-Gingrich, to bring to light or expose. Jesus uses the same word and teaches the same truth in the following passage: "And this is the judgment, that light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reproved. But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be manifest, that they have been wrought in God." (John 3:19-21; cf. Heb. 4: 12, 13.) The exhortation in verse 14 apparently is addressed to those out of Christ; although we do not know the exact source of the quotation. The important thing, however, is the truth which it teaches.

### A Timely Admonition

(Eph. 5: 15, 16)

*Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*

Any one who reads the epistles of Paul will soon realize that it is a serious thing to live the Christian life. The apostle's admonition in verse 15—"Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise"—reminds one of a similar admonition by the Wise Man of the Old Testament, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." (Prov. 4: 23.) Our "walking" is the result of our "thinking," and that accounts for the keeping of our hearts with all diligence; and when we stop to realize that life is fraught with momentous possibilities, and vast issues may depend on the manner in which we spend a single day, we can see just how serious life is.

What Paul wrote the Colossian letter, he said, "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without." This was

especially necessary in view of the slanderous reports which were circulated regarding Christian conduct. Paul wanted the Colossian brethren, and all other Christians, to demonstrate to the world that all such reports were completely false. In his first general letter, Peter exhorts, 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 evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." (1 Pet. 2: 11, 12; cf. Matt. 5: 13-16.) Jesus also taught his disciples to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matt. 10: 16); while Paul, in his letter to the Romans, says, "I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple unto that which is evil." (Rom. 16: 19.)

In commenting on the original word for "redeeming," Arndt-Gingrich makes this observation: Col. 4: 5 and Eph. 5: 16 cannot be interpreted with certainty. The best meaning is probably this, "Make the most of the time," while The Interpreter's Bible thinks that Paul is urging Christians to put to profit the fleeting occasions which are given them. J. H. Morrison, in The Speaker's Bible, has this to say regarding Paul's exhortation: "Life has frequently been represented as offering to each man a single great opportunity, a strategic moment decisive of destiny, as if life's great issues were staked upon a single throw. Shakespeare's well known lines,

'There is a tide in the affairs of men,

Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;

Omitted, all the voyage of their life

Is bound in shallows and in miseries,'

has helped to give vogue to this idea. And there is a measure of solemn truth in it, for the strategic element does enter into life, and destiny is determined by our use of the critical hour. There may come a decisive 'Now or Never,' which, if it be not grasped, leaves forever after a bitter legacy of vain regrets." He then goes on to point out that the chief thing to be noted is that the great op-



portunity must be prepared for, not simply waited for. It is the duty of

the Christian to make the best possible use of the time at his disposal.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What is the primary value of time? Give reasons for your answer.  
What prayer did Moses offer regarding time?  
What great motive should always actuate our living?  
In what sense should the Lord's people number their days?  
In what sense should this life be reckoned as a great opportunity?  
What great purpose regarding time should always be before us?

### The Golden Text

Discuss the place of the heart in the life of a man.  
What is the spiritual heart?  
In what sense may an individual harden his heart?  
What great danger, therefore, is always possible for any child of God?  
What condition caused the Israelites to harden their hearts?  
What application does the writer of Hebrews make of this principle?

### Specific Warnings against the Common Sins of the Day

What appears to have been Paul's aim when he wrote the words of this section of the lesson text?  
Why was it necessary to warn Christians against such flagrant sins?  
Discuss some Bible examples of the sins against which Paul warned in the text now before us.  
What does the Bible teach regarding the sin of covetousness?  
Why does covetousness have such a hold on so many professed Christians?

What does Paul mean by "filthiness" and "foolish talking"?  
What is "jesting"?  
Why did the apostle warn again one's being deceived with empty words?

### Christians Should Walk As Children of Light

Why should the Ephesian and Colossian epistles be read in the light of each other?  
Against whose sins was Paul warning in this section of the lesson text?  
Why did the apostle frequently contrast the present state of Christians with their past?  
Why should Christians walk in the light? Give reasons for your answer.  
Where does their responsibility now lie? What is this true?  
What does it mean to walk in the light? Show what Paul means by walking in the light.  
What does he mean by "goodness and righteousness and truth"?  
What three things does Paul call upon the Lord's people to do?  
What exhortation did Paul give to those out of Christ?

### A Timely Admonition

Why is living the Christian life a serious thing?  
Why should Christians look carefully at to how they walk?  
How can they do this?  
What does it mean to walk wisely?  
Why is it essential that Christians walk wisely?  
Discuss the teaching of Peter and Jesus regarding this question.  
What is the meaning of "redeeming the time"?  
In what way can one make the most of his time?

## Lesson III—April 19, 1964

## CHRISTIAN WARFARE

### Lesson Text

Eph. 6: 10-18; Phil. 1: 27-30

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might.

11 Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

13 Wherefore take up the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

15 And having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

16 Withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil *one*.

17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

18 With all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the

Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints,

27 Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ: that, whether I come and see you or be absent, I may hear of your state, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel;

28 And in nothing affrighted by the adversaries: which is for them an evident token of perdition, but of your salvation, and that from God;

29 Because to you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer in his behalf;

30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Fight the good fight of the faith."* (1 Tim. 6: 12.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Tim. 2: 1-13.

## Daily Bible Readings

April 13. M.....	Weapons Not Carnal (2 Cor. 10: 1-6)
April 14. T.....	A Fight of Faith (2 Tim. 4: 6-18)
April 15. W.....	No Worldly Entanglements (2 Tim. 2: 4-10)
April 16. T.....	Good Soldier of Christ (2 Tim. 2: 1-3)
April 17. F.....	Christ's Kingdom Not of This World (John 18: 35-38)
April 18. S.....	The Good Fight (1 Tim. 6: 11-16)
April 19. S.....	Victory Through Faith (1 John 5: 1-5)

TIME.—Ephesians, A.D. 62; Philipians, A.D. 63 or 64.

PLACE.—**Rome.**

PERSONS.—**Paul** and the brethren to whom he wrote.

## Introduction

As life moves forward, there comes to most of us a clearer view of its meaning, and of its intense importance. We are led to realize more and more that we are surrounded by many strange and hidden alien forces, and are harassed by numberless unseen foes. And it becomes increasingly apparent that the greater our effort to live a life which is pleasing to God (2 Cor. 5: 9), the greater is our danger of being assaulted by the evil one. (Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 12, 1 Pet. 4: 12-19.) All of this is true, because Christ and the sinful world are diametrically opposed to each other. There is a life and death struggle in progress between them, with issues involved so far-reaching and the conflict so universal, as to make impossible the exemption of any responsible human being from the contest. Every one therefore must take a stand, either for or against the Lord. (Cf. Matt. 12: 30.)

Christianity had its beginning in the Roman Empire, which was noted for its great armies and successful wars; and while the apostle Paul frequently used the Roman soldier and carnal warfare to illustrate the Christian soldier and the great conflict which is being waged between

right and wrong, it is a fact worthy of notice that neither he nor any other New Testament writer ever authorized or encouraged the Lord's people to have part in the wars of this world. It is the Lord's will that all men be saved from sin (1 Tim. 2: 34; 2 Pet. 3: 9) and made ready for a home with him in heaven; and that involves the greatest conflict in which mankind can engage. The sacrifices and dangers are comparable to, if indeed they are not greater than, those which belong to carnal conflicts. This is especially true of those followers of Christ who are faithful to their trust. (Cf. 2 Cor. 11: 23-28.)

Our lesson for today, as indicated by the subject, has to do with the Christian's side of the struggle between right and wrong; and, as already implied, we shall consider it from the standpoint of Paul's well known and favorite figure—the Christian warfare and the soldier of the cross. It is interesting to go through the letters which Paul wrote to the Lord's people, and observe the number of times he refers to the Christian soldier and the Christian warfare. The principal phase of army life is the conflict itself, but

closely related to it and essential to its success are the equipment, training, and attitude of the individual

soldiers. It is with these last phases of the question that we are to deal in this study.

### The Golden Text

#### *"Fight the good fight of the faith "*

This is one of the ways in which Paul thought of the life and work of a gospel preacher, along with such other figures as that of a builder, a husbandman, a household vessel, and a bondservant. However, it is to the first figure, that of a soldier, that the apostle returns again and again; for it appears to embody the true ideal of a minister of the gospel. Here are a few of his references to the Christian minister, under the figure of a soldier: "Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier on service entangleth himself in the affairs of this life; that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier." (2 Tim. 2: 3, 4.) "This charge I commit unto thee, my child Timothy, according to the prophecies which led the way to thee, that by them thou mayest war the good warfare." (1 Tim. 1: 18.) "For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds." (2 Cor. 10: 2.) One of the clearest and most detailed statements which the apostle gives of the work of a preacher, in which he refers to the fight of faith, is that found in the latter part of his last letter to 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, fulfill 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.)

In urging Timothy to "fight the good fight of *the faith*," the reference is to that of the gospel. (Cf. Acts 6: 7.) This means, of course, that Timothy, in waging this warfare, would have to act within the framework of the gospel. That was the way that Paul fought; for he said, "I have fought *the* good fight. The article points to a definite or specific fight, that which was ordained by the Lord. Timothy was not exhorted merely to fight; he was to engage in a specific fight, for a definite purpose. He was told to "lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called, and didst confess the good confession in the sight of many witnesses." And then the apostles goes on to say, "I charge thee in the sight of God, who giveth life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed the good confession; that thou keep the commandment, without spot, without reproach, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Tim. 6: 12-14.) To use and adapt the words of the writer of Ecclesiastes, "There is no discharge in this fight of the faith." (Eccles. 8: 8.)

### The Text Explained

#### Christians' Call to Arms

(Eph. 6: 10-13)

*Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this dark-*

*ness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Wherefore take up the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.*

Earlier in the epistle from which this section of the lesson text is taken, Paul prayed for the strengthening of the brethren to whom he

wrote; and it appears quite reasonable to say that we may take that prayer as a commentary on his meaning of "be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might," as set forth in the passage now before us. The prayer follows: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God." (Eph. 3: 14-19.)

The life which pleases God is not that which observes outward forms only, but that which is characterized by purity and Christlike holiness in the inward man. This spiritual, in every age of the world, has been in danger of extinction through the pressure of material influences. In the words of Hall L. Calhoun, "It is always the tendency of ordinary men to turn from the more refined and subtle beauty of the spiritual life and seek refuge in the tangible, the visible, the material, to often adopting, as the outward form, the product of some false extraneous idolatry, borrowed from a world that could no longer retain God in its thoughts." This was the history of the Jews who wanted to be like the nations around them, and it has been the history of the church of the Lord in many instances.

In saying that "our wrestling is not against flesh and blood," Paul makes it plain that the Christian warfare is not on a human level: if it were, then human strength could be relied upon. (Cf. John 18: 36.) Our fight is against "the wiles of the devil" in general, and against his lesser powers, as they struggle against the right under his leadership. (Cf. Dan. 10: 13, 20.) We learn from Col. 1: 16; 2: 10 that Christ is the head of all principalities and powers, of whatever rank they may be; but it is evident from the passage now under consideration that some mighty spirits are in direct rebellion

against God. In commenting on this section of the lesson text, F. F. Bruce says,

"The leader of these hostile powers is referred to by Paul in 2 Cor. 4: 4 as 'the god of this age,' who has blinded the minds of unbelievers to the light of the gospel. [Cf. Eph. 2: 2.] The present world-order as organized in rebellion against God remains under the domination of these powers; only in Christ can men gain the victory over them and be released from their grasp (cf. 1 John 5: 19). The appearance of Christ on earth was the signal for an unprecedented outburst of activity on the part of the realm of darkness controlled by these world-rulers, as though they knew that a mortal threat was being presented to their dominion . . . Against such 'spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places' the Christian must be equipped with the panoply of God if he is to withstand them successfully." (The Epistle to the Ephesians, p. 128f.)

#### Things Essential to a Successful Stand

(Eph. 6: 14-18)

*Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: with all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.*

"Having girded your loins with truth." The girdle of the Roman soldier, who was the illustration Paul was using, was not a mere ornament, but was an essential part of his equipment. Placed around his loins, the girdle supported his sword and was useful in keeping his armor and clothing in place. The application to the Christian soldier is with reference to the state of his heart as it respects the truth of God—the practical acknowledgment of the truth as it is in Christ, or the agreement of our convictions with his revelation. (Cf. John 8: 31, 32.) "Having put

on the breastplate of righteousness. As its name indicates, this part of the soldier's armor was worn over his breast and served to protect his vital organs. Paul uses "righteousness" here in the sense of moral rectitude, or correctness in thinking, feeling, and acting. (Cf. Prov. 4: 23; 1 Thess. 5: 8; 1 John 3: 7, 10.) When people do that which is right, they have the assurance of God's protection, both in this world and in that one which is to come. (Cf. Matt. 28: 20; Rom. 8: 28, 31-39.)

*Having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.* The soldier who makes a determined stand against the enemy must have his feet protected. This makes it possible for him to move with quick and certain step. (Cf. Isa. 52: 7.) To be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace is to have a cheerful and willing attitude of mind, which gives a spirit of courageous readiness for the battle with evil. This state of mind is produced by the gospel, which is the gospel of peace. (Cf. Rom. 5: 1-5.) *Taking up the shield of faith.* In addition to (withal) those parts of the armor which were worn on the body, an essential part of the Roman soldier's equipment was the shield. This part of the armor was oblong in shape, and was large enough to afford protection for the whole body. It was usually carried on the left arm, and was held in place by means of a handle. An ordinary shield was about four feet long and two and one half feet wide. The shield of the Christian soldier is faith, or a conviction which makes him sensitive to holy influences which neutralize the power of temptations and evil influences. Such faith enlists the direct help of God in overcoming these evil things. (Cf. 1 Cor. 10: 13; 2 Pet. 2: 9; James 1: 2-8.)

*"Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit."* A different word is introduced here, as well as a difference in grammatical construction. The word for "take" (*dechomai*) in verse 17 is different from the term for "take" (*analambanō*) in verses 13, 16. Verse 16 has the Participial form, while verse 17 has the direct imperative. The idea in verse 17 is to *take up* or *receive* something. The Christian soldier is exhorted to do something himself,

that is, gird his loins, put on the breastplate, shoe his feet, and take up the shield; but when it comes to the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, they must be received from the Divine side. (Cf. 1 Thess. 5: 8.) The knowledge of salvation, which can come only from the Lord, enables the Christian soldier to hold up his head with joy and confidence, and it comes to him from the Lord (cf. Eph. 2: 8), as the Scriptures assure him. The sword of the Spirit is described as the word of God, and it is the weapon which the Spirit himself puts into the hand of the soldier of the cross. (Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17.)

After the Christian soldier is fully equipped with the armor which he must wear and use, he is exhorted to pray. "With all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints." To quote Bruce again, "Paul now passes from Metaphor to the literal language of the spiritual conflict. When a Christian receives his armor in *The Pilgrim's Progress* the weapon of 'All-prayer' is given as one which will stand him in good stead when everything else fails, and with this he prevails against the fiends which beset him in the Valley of the Shadow: when he poured out his soul in fervent prayer 'they gave back, and came no farther.' Prayer and supplication—*pr o s e u c h ē* and *deesis*—cannot be sharply distinguished, but their conjunction adds intensity to the apostle's words." In a footnote, Dr. Bruce says, "In so far as they are distinguishable, *proseuchē* is the more general word for 'prayer,' while *deesis* means 'request' or 'entreaty.'" To pray "in the Spirit" is to pray in the realm of the Spirit, as he directs, and depending upon him for its effectiveness. (Cf. Rom. 8: 26, 27; Luke 18: 1-8.)

It should be observed that no provisions have been made for retreat on the part of the Christian soldier. He is commanded to fight the good fight of the faith, and lay hold on life eternal. Not only have no provisions been made for turning back, the Lord has revealed is mind regarding those who do turn back. (Cf. Luke 9: 62; 2 Pet. 2: 20-22.) Although commanded to stand and forbidden to turn back, the Christian soldier is sometimes made the target of attack

from the rear, that is, from his own brethren. This, of course, is sad; but if the soldier of the cross remains faithful to the Lord, continues his good fight of faith, and does not retaliate, his reward will be great. (Cf. Matt. 5: 38, 39; Luke 6: 22, 23.)

### **Climactic Christian Living Involves Suffering for Christ's Sake**

(Phil. 1: 27-30)

*Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ that: whether I come and see you or be absent, I may hear of your state, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel; and in nothing affrighted by the adversaries: which is for them an evident token of perdition, but of your salvation, and that from God; because to you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer in his behalf: having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.*

This is a clarion call on the part of the imprisoned Paul to his beloved Philippian brethren to honor Christ by a life of faithfulness; for living worthily of the gospel of Christ is to maintain a solid front in the battle for the right. The "faith of the gospel" is a system of truths to be believed; and since faith without works is dead, the lives of those who accept the gospel must be governed according to its principles. The gospel of Christ is the greatest message which has ever been spoken to the human race; and the responsibility which grows out of its acceptance by those to whom it is addressed. And there is nothing which gives a greater demonstration of faithfulness on the part of the Lord's people, than standing fast in one spirit, with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel. That was the spirit of the early church, and it had a powerful effect upon the preaching which was done by the apostles, that is, the unity of the church added force to the message of the apostles. (Cf. Acts. 4: 32, 33.)

Christians are comrades in the great struggle for the right, and they owe it to each other, and to the Lord, to maintain a united front. The pre-

requisites of a good soldier in Christ are (1) he must love the cause for which he is fighting; (2) he must have faith in his leader; (3) he must have faith in his fellow-soldiers; and (4) he must have hope of victory; all of which presuppose a spirit of unity. In speaking of this phase of the subject, J. W. Shepherd says, "On the subject of unity too much stress cannot be laid. Unity conditions efficiency and growth and comfort. It is so in the home and institutions of learning; but preeminently so in a body of believers in Jesus Christ. A badly divided, discordant, wrangling church is about the most offensive, as well as the most inefficient thing the eye can look upon. A church in which the sentiment of unity has been displaced by the bitterness of mutual ill will has reached the day when its prosperity is at an end—at an end at any rate until its membership changes its front and comes into a better mood. How much harm has been done to individuals, how the advance of the Lord's kingdom has been hindered, by the unseemly spectacle of disciples of the Lord arrayed in bitterness against each other! Resentments, whims, whisperings, grudges, alienations are all out of place in a company of true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. They can make no headway in commending the gospel to others, or in magnifying it as the saving power of God, if they themselves are split into factions, and are biting and devouring each other instead of exemplifying a temper of love and unity. Unity will assure them power, and they can move forward to conquest."

When the Lord's people come to understand and appreciate Paul's statement in the last two verses of this section of the lesson text, they will have a greater motive for letting their manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, and for putting forth every effort for its success. "Because to you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, only to believe on him, but also to suffer in his behalf: having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me." (Cf. Acts 16: 19 ff.; Rom. 8: 16, 17; Acts 14, 22; 2 Tim. 3: 12.)

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

Discuss the general conditions under which the average Christian lives.

Why are the Lord's people in constant danger of being assaulted by the evil one?

Why must every responsible person take a stand either for or against the Lord?

Why did Paul frequently refer to the Roman soldier to illustrate the responsibilities of the soldier of the cross?

What is the sphere of the Christian soldier's activities?

What is the principle phase of the Christian warfare?

### The Golden Text

What special application does Paul make of the words of the golden text?

Discuss some of his references to the soldier of the cross?

Give a resume of Paul's teaching regarding the duties of a gospel preacher.

What did he mean by saying, "Fight the good fight of *the faith*"?

Show that Paul applied the same principle to himself.

How long will the Christian warfare continue? Give reasons for your answer.

### Christians' Call to Arms

What does Paul mean by being "strong the Lord"?

In what way is this accomplished?

Discuss the nature of the life which pleases the Lord.

Why do so many professed Christians seek refuge in the tangible, visible things of life?

What does Paul mean by saying that "our wrestling is not against flesh and blood"?

Who are our hostile opposers?

Why is there such a conflict between Christ and the sources of the evil?

### Things Essential to a Successful Stand

What does it mean to gird one's loins with truth?

What is the breastplate of righteousness, and how is it to be used?

In what way is the Christian soldier to shoe his feet? Give reasons for your answer.

What is the shield of faith, and how does one use it?

What are some things which it accomplishes in the Christian's warfare?

What is the helmet of salvation?

What is the sword of the Spirit?

How does the soldier of the cross come into possession of them?

What essential item must the Christian soldier have in addition to his armor?

What is the value of prayer in the Christian life?

What does the Bible teach regarding the retreat of the soldier of the cross?

Under what circumstances is he sometimes assaulted from the rear?

### Climactic Christian Living Involves

#### Suffering for Christ's Sake

What does Paul mean by saying, "Let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ?"

What should characterize their striving for the faith of the gospel?

Why are Christians obligated to strive for the faith of the gospel of Christ?

In what way did the early church illustrate this principle?

Why is unity among the Lord's people so essential?

Discuss the devastating effect which division among Christians has on the Lord's work.

What great motive do Christian people have in letting their manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ?

What does it mean to suffer on behalf of Christ?

## Lesson IV—April 26, 1964

## THE MIND OF CHRIST

### Lesson Text

Phil. 2: 1-11

1 If there is therefore any exhortation in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions,

2 Make full my joy, that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind;

3 *Doing* nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself;

4 Not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others.

5 Have this mind in you, which

was also in Christ Je'-sus:

6 Who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped,

7 But emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men;

8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient *even* unto death, yea, the death of the cross.

9 Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name;

10 That in the name of Je'-sus

every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven and *things* on earth and *things* under the earth,

11 And that every tongue should confess that Je'-sus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Golden Text.—“*Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps.* (1 Pet. 2: 21.)

Devotional Reading.—Phil. 2: 12-18.

## Daily Bible Readings

April 20. M..... Christ Our Example in Prayer (Matt. 26: 36-46)  
 April 21. T..... Christ Our Example in Obedience (Matt. 3: 13-17)  
 April 22. W..... Christ Our Example Toward Error (Matt. 15: 1-20)  
 April 23. T..... Christ Our Example Toward the Erring (Luke 7: 36-50)  
 April 24. F..... Christ Our Example in Forgiveness (Luke 23: 33-38)  
 April 25. S..... Christ Our Example in Compassion (Matt. 20: 29-34)  
 April 26. S..... Christ Our Example in All Things (Phil. 2: 1-5)

Time.—A.D. 63 or 64.

PLACE.—Rome.

PERSONS.—Paul and the brethren to whom he wrote.

## Introduction

The original word for “mind” in the lesson now under consideration is *phroneo*, and it means about the same thing as our words disposition and attitude; and it has been called the first definition of the test for a Christian. No one can be pleasing to the Lord whose disposition and attitude are contrary to the mind of Christ. In giving that which may very properly be called the first condition of discipleship. Jesus says, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” (Matt. 16: 24.) The practical meaning of this is, Let the man who would be a disciple or follower of Christ abandon his own way of thinking, and sincerely endeavor to manifest the disposition of Christ.

It seems that the popular conception of the mind or spirit of Christ is to be mild and gentle, possess a sweet disposition, have an amiable temper, and be somewhat religious, even though the laws of God are not strictly obeyed. But any one who is acquainted with the New Testament knows that what has just been said does not represent the disposition or attitude of Christ. Everyone, of course, should be interested in knowing just what is the mind or spirit of Christ; and since the phrase is so frequently employed, let us look at some of the facts in the case and see if we can learn just what the New Testament teaches regarding the question. When we speak of the “spirit” of Christ in this sense, the meaning is the same as his mind, disposition, or

attitude. Paul refers to “the Spirit of Christ” in Rom. 8: 9, but the reference, of course, is to the Holy Spirit; because Christ is the immediate channel and the occasion of his gift to men. (Cf. Acts 2: 38, 39; 5: 32; John 14: 26.) But when the term “spirit” is spelled with a small “s,” the reference is to the Lord’s mind or disposition. How, then, may we learn what his mind or spirit was?

(1) *The spirit of Christ is manifested in his life and teaching.* He began his public ministry by walking approximately sixty-five miles to submit to John’s baptism. His first recorded expression was, “Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” (Matt. 3: 15; cf. Matt. 4: 4; 5: 3; John 4: 34.) These same manifestations of devotion to God and his will characterized Christ throughout his public ministry. (2) *The spirit of Christ has no sympathy for presumption.* He is sympathetic toward human weakness and infirmity, but there is not a single case on record in which he excused the slightest departure from the Divine order. (Cf. James 2: 10.) It requires just as high authority to change a law which has been enacted, as it does to enact it in the first place. (3) *The spirit of Christ is manifested in the characters he loved.* The characters whom the Lord loved were not those whom the world regarded as the most amiable, but those who were unswervingly devoted to the will of God. The spirit of Christ, therefore, is preeminently the spirit of faithful.



rigid, zealous, and exclusive obedience to God in all of his appointments; while at the same time just as

faithfully refraining from everything not authorized by him. (Cf. Matt. 7: 21-23.)

## The Golden Text

*"Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps."* These words are a part of an exhortation which Peter addressed to servants who had become followers of Christ, and the passage which follows has been described as one of the noblest parts of the epistle. "Servants, be in subjection to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the forward. For this is acceptable, if for conscience toward God a man endureth griefs, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye sin and are buffeted for it, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were going astray like sheep; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." (1 Pet. 2: 18-25.)

Some one has pointed out the fact that man wants an ideal which will call forth his enthusiasm and awaken his energies. He must, in fact, have one: it is necessary to his being; for every man is made up of two selves, namely, (1) the self of the man as he is; and (2) the self of the man as he would or should be. This need makes itself felt all through one's life—in childhood, young manhood, and in maturity. What man is there who has not set before him at the outset of his career someone who is his ideal, not indeed to be servilely imi-

tated by him, but whose spirit he may imbibe and whose noble example he may follow until they become a part of his being? Such an ideal is not only a deep necessity, but a real force; for it molds character, influences action, shapes life, and fills it with enthusiasm. The one man to be despaired of is the man without an ideal; the man who has no admiration for anyone who is not himself, or for anything which does not belong to him or form a part of himself.

The greatest ideal of course, is the Christian ideal. Christianity puts before mankind an ideal which will satisfy all his needs, and which will meet his necessities. And let it be remembered that if an ideal is to be a power in one's life it must possess certain characteristics and qualities chief among which are these: (1) *An ideal must be definite.* Many lives have been wasted because they are lived in pursuit of ideas rather than ideals which evade their grasp, slip from their hold and lack definiteness. (2) *An ideal must be universal.* There is nothing lacking in the ideal which Christ supplies. (3) *An ideal must be perfect.* That is what Christ offers, and this in the well nigh universal testimony of men everywhere. (4) *An ideal must be final.* Perhaps the finality of the Christian ideal cannot be summarized better than in the pithy words of Ernest Renan: "After Jesus there is nothing more but to fruitify and develop," or, as C. J. Ridgeway observes, "It comprehends all future history. The moral efforts of all ages will be efforts to realize this character and make it actually as it is potentially universal. Humanity as it advances in excellence will only be approximating to the Christian type. Any divergence from that will not be progress, but debasement and corruption."

## The Text Explained

### The Need for Self-Effacement

(Phil. 2: 1-4)

*If there is therefore any exhortation in Christ, if any consolation of*

*love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions. make full my joy, that ye be of the same mind, having the same*

*love being of one accord, of one mind; doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself; not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others.*

It appears that the germs of discord were beginning to affect the church in Philippi, but from the tone of the letter which Paul sent to those brethren, it is evident that whatever possibilities of trouble which may have existed, the situation had not yet reached serious proportions. The case was far different from that which characterized the Corinthians, but the ever-watchful Paul wanted the matter corrected before it could gain any momentum. It was necessary for the apostle to threaten the latter church with severer punishment, if they did not correct their sinful behavior; but in the case of the Philippians, a simple word of exhortation should suffice.

It is not difficult to imagine how causes which could produce trouble in a church like the one in Philippi might be introduced. If one will only read the history of the origin of that church, he will soon see that it was composed of widely different elements. (See Acts 16: 11-34.) A group of people so diverse in character as the Jewish Lydia, the slave maiden, and the heathen jailor—people so different in race, culture, and social standing, could easily be divided into factions; and particularly so, if there appeared among them other men and women of strong dispositions and who were actuated by motives of ambition and pride. This is one reason why every congregation should have qualified shepherds to watch over the flock.

In the preceding paragraph, Paul had urged the Philippians to "stand fast in one spirit, with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel;" but that exhortation had reference to their fight in behalf of the cause of Christ against a common enemy. But here the plea is for unity among the brethren themselves. And in urging the Philippians to be a united body, Paul mentions four considerations to aid them, namely, (1) "exhortation in Christ," that is encouragement or support which Christ supplies; (2) "consolation of love," that is, any persuasion (see marginal note), in-

centive, or solace afforded by love, especially Christ's love for them; (3) "fellowship of the Spirit," that is, participation in the gifts and influences of the Spirit; and (4) "tender mercies and compassions" that is, Christian affection and sympathy. And with these helps and motives for right living and brotherly love, the aged apostle then calls upon his beloved brethren to make full his joy.

The Philippian brethren could fill the apostle Paul's heart to overflowing by (1) being of the same mind, (2) having the same love, (3) being of one accord, of one mind, (4) doing nothing through faction or through vainglory (5) but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself and (6) not looking each of you to his own things but each of you also to the things of others. The unity of mind which the apostle urged upon the Philippians could in part be achieved by the refusal to be motivated by faction and vainglory; and by the proper esteem of one member for the others. Paul had said to the Romans "In love of the brethren be tenderly affectioned one to another; in honor preferring one another." (Rom. 12: 10.) The original word for "preferring" occurs only here in the New Testament and it means according to Arndt-Gingrich, to "try to outdo one another in showing respect."

### The Mind of Christ Exemplified

(Phil. 2: 5-8)

*Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, being obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross.*

This is one of the great New Testament passages regarding the Incarnation. (Cf. John 1: 1-18; Col. 2:9; Heb. 1: 1-4.) The literal meaning of "incarnate" is to embody in flesh; and so, when we speak of the incarnation the reference is to that process whereby the Eternal Word of God appeared in history as the man Jesus Christ. This was done to reveal God

to men in the fulness of his love, and to make possible a way to save them. (Cf. John 3: 16; 2 Cor. 5: 18-21.) But it should be kept in mind that in becoming flesh this Divine Being did not cease to be the Eternal Word. (Cf. Rev. 19: 13.) He did not lay aside his divine nature, but only his glory. (Cf. John 17: 5.) Before the incarnation, Christ was "in the form of God;" but with that great event, he took "the form of a servant." He did not become a new being, but entered rather into a new mode or manner of being, which is indicated by the term "flesh." (Cf. Heb. 5: 7.)

Thus, the most important events and records in history can often be traced to comparatively insignificant causes. It was apparently due to a somewhat minor discord in the Philippian church which furnished the occasion for one of the most significant statements which is found in Paul's writings regarding the incarnation, death, and exaltation of Christ; and it was upon this statement that he based his most inspiring plea for the Philippian brethren to imitate the Lord. The imitation which Paul had in view, let it be observed, does not consist in trying to imagine that which Jesus would do, and then try to do as nearly the same as possible; but rather to cultivate the spirit and disposition which characterized him and endeavor to live accordingly.

When one reads that which Paul says about the mind of Christ, he sees at once that there was no sacrifice too great for him to make, and no humiliation too painful for him to endure, in order to make it possible for man to live again. And the reason for it all is seen in the fact that the Lord was always actuated by a great motive. The writer of Hebrews makes this plain, when he says, "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. 12:2.)

The mind of Christ, let it again be emphasized, has reference to his disposition, to the attitude which he manifested; and that was what Paul wanted the Philippians to cultivate and demonstrate. Williams renders this section of the lesson text in these words: "Keeping on fostering the

same disposition that Christ Jesus had. Though he was existing in the nature of God, he did not think his being on an equality with God a thing to be selfishly grasped, but he laid it aside as he took on the nature of a slave and became like other men. Because he was recognized as a man, in reality as well as in outward form, he finally humiliated himself in obedience so as to die, even to die on a cross."

The humiliation which Christ suffered and the great sacrifice which he made for the sins of others, should impress everyone with the fact that manifesting the spirit of Christ is more than endeavoring to have a good disposition. A good disposition is indeed necessary; and so is cross-bearing. When the Lord's people have the mind of Christ, they are willing to make every effort possible to do that which is necessary to lead others in the way of righteousness. But, as someone has observed, it is not the service which he renders, but the spirit in which he renders it, that distinguishes the Christian. The drive of Paul's amazing career as a servant of Christ came from the certainty, within his own being, that his mind had to be like the mind of his Lord; and because of that attitude he could, without any hesitation say, "Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ." (1 Cor. 11: 1.)

### His Glorious Exaltation

(Phil. 2: 9-11)

*Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

The exaltation of Jesus was in keeping with the principle which he frequently mentioned during his public ministry while here upon the earth, namely, "For every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (Luke 14:11.) In commenting on the exaltation of Christ, Williams says, "His humiliation lifted him to the highest lordship. To him every knee shall bow, his name every tongue shall confess. *Every* here in-

eludes rational, moral beings in all the universe, earth, heaven, and the underworld. This does not mean universal salvation for men, whether now living on earth or dead in the underworld. He is merely extolling the exalted Christ to the highest degree. Even the lost must ascribe to him universal lordship."

Vincent points out the fact that the *name* in the passage now before us means the personal name, and that it includes all that is involved in a name. He quotes Ellicott as saying that in the name of Jesus is "the spiritual sphere, the holy element as it were, *in* which every prayer is to be offered and every knee to bow." In his final discourse to his disciples, before going to the cross, Jesus said, "I am the way. and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14: 6.) And that is substantially what Paul is saying in the text now before us. Every prayer, all acceptable service, and every word which men shall utter in praise to God must be in and through the name of Jesus, in order to be acceptable to God. Or, to state the same thing in another way, God, as the result of the humiliation and suffering of Jesus, exalted him to the supreme position of mediator "between God and men." (1 Tim. 2: 5.) Not only is Jesus the peace-maker between God and men (cf. 2 Cor. 5: 18 ff), he is the only possible way that men can travel on their way back to God.

But the principle of rewarding the obedient is not limited to Jesus. The writer of Hebrews says, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the love which ye showed toward his name, in that ye ministered unto the saints, and still do minister." (Heb. 6: 10.) The same principle "in reverse," of course, applies to those who are disobedient. In speaking of rewards and punishments,

David Lipscomb says, "From the beginning of time God dealt with man upon the principle of placing rewards and punishments before him. He promised blessings, favor, and honor to the obedient, and disfavor, infamy, disgrace, and evil to the disobedient. To Adam in Eden he promised perpetual freedom from pain, suffering, and woe, and constant plenty, the gratification of all wants, and the enjoyment of all desires of the soul, if he was obedient. If his will was limited by submission to the law of God, no good thing should be withheld from him. On the other hand, if he refused to obey God, he should die.

"In that term *death* is embodied not only the act of dying, but all that precedes, accompanies, and succeeds it. It carries with it the idea of weakness, decay, suffering, weariness, want, sorrow, distress of soul, disappointment, and final separation of soul and body and the disintegration of body into Mother Dust. These results come truly as the reward of the good and the punishment of the evil. But they come not as the result of partiality, on the one hand, not of vindictive spite, on the other. They come as the result of fixed and unchangeable laws—laws that lie at the very foundation of God's government of the universe; laws that are essential to the dignity, honor, authority and even the existence of God himself. Indeed, they are, beyond all question, laws and principles developed in the existence of God himself."

Paul therefore in urging the Philipians to manifest the mind of Christ, enforced his exhortation with the greatest examples and principles which can be brought to the attention of mankind. This, of course, is enough to show us the great importance of the lesson which we are considering today.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What is the meaning of the term "mind," as used in the lessons now before us?  
What can you say with reference to its importance as it respects a Christian?  
Why can't a person be a follower of Christ who manifests his own mind?  
What is the popular meaning of the mind or spirit of Christ?

What is the New Testament meaning of the term?  
In what three ways can we see the spirit or mind of Christ manifested?

### The Golden Text

Under what circumstance were the words of this text written?  
Discuss their setting.  
What kind of ideal does man need and want?  
Why is this true?  
What does a noble ideal do for a person?

Why is the Christian ideal the greatest possible ideal which a man can have?  
 What are the basic qualities of an adequate ideal?  
 Why can't a better ideal than that of Christ be placed before the human race?

#### The Need for Self-Effacement

Why did Paul give the exhortation in the first section of the lesson text for today?  
 What is suggested by the tone of his message to the Philippians?  
 Discuss the probable cause for discord among those brethren.  
 What does this suggest regarding the need of every congregation of the Lord's people?  
 How is Paul's exhortation for unity related to the plea for unity in the preceding paragraph of his letter to the Philippians?  
 What four considerations did he mention as "aids" to the goal he set before them?  
 Discuss what is meant by each one of them.  
 In what way could the brethren in Philippi fill the apostle's heart with joy?  
 What were they urged not to do?

#### The Mind of Christ Exemplified

What is the nature of this section of the lesson text?  
 What is the meaning of "incarnation"?

Why did Paul bring this great event before the Philippian brethren?  
 What does it mean to have the mind of Christ?  
 What was the mind of Christ which Paul refers to?  
 How can Christians demonstrate that they have the mind of Christ?  
 Show how Paul himself exemplified the fact that he had the mind of Christ.  
 What did that enable him to do effectively?

#### His Glorious Exaltation

In keeping with what principle was Jesus exalted?  
 To what point did the humiliation of Christ cause God to raise him?  
 Why must everything, which is offered to God in the way of worship and service must be done in the name of Jesus?  
 What is meant by "bowing" in the name of Jesus?  
 Who must confess that Jesus Christ is Lord?  
 Show that the principle of rewarding the obedient also applies to mankind.  
 What does the Bible teach regarding rewards and punishments?  
 Why is this principle so strictly adhered to?  
 How do we know that the lesson now before us is of great importance?  
 What impression should this truth make upon all of us?

## Lesson V—May 3, 1964

# WARNINGS REGARDING DANGEROUS PHILOSOPHIES

## Lesson Text

Col. 2: 8-12, 16-23

8 Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ:

9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,

10 And in him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power:

11 In whom ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ;

12 Having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath day:

17 Which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ's.

18 Let no man rob you of your prize by a voluntary humility and worshipping of the angels, dwelling in the things which he hath seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

19 And not holding fast the Head, from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God.

20 If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye subject yourselves to ordinances,

21 Handle not, nor taste, nor touch

22 (All which things are to perish with the using), after the precepts and doctrines of men?

23 Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body; but *are* not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Many false prophets are gone out into the world."* (1 John 4: 1.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Col. 2: 1-7, 13-15.

## Daily Bible Readings

April 27. M.....Satan's Wiles (2 Cor. 2: 5-17)  
 April 28. T.....Danger of Deception (2 Cor. 11: 1-10)  
 April 29. W.....Apostasy Foretold (1 Tim. 4: 1-15)  
 April 30. T.....Wolves in Sheep's Clothing (Matt. 7: 15-23)  
 May 1. F.....Apostates to Appear (Acts 20: 28-35)  
 May 2. S.....Some Are Deceived and Deceive Others (2 Tim. 3: 1-17)  
 May 3. S.....Some Love Error (2 Tim. 4: 1-8)

TIME.—A.D. 62.

PLACE.—Rome.

PERSONS.—Paul and the brethren to whom he wrote.

## Introduction

In order to understand something of the condition which brought about Paul's letter to the Colossians, something should be said about the general setting. The city of Colossae was located on the southern bank of the Lycus river (see map), near the place where it flows into the famous Meander. The city was also on the great highway between Ephesus and the Euphrates valley, the highway which connected eastern and western Asia. Colossae was about one hundred miles east of Ephesus. It was one of a group of three cities in the Lycus valley of ancient Phrygia—Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis. All of these cities are mentioned in the letter we are now studying. They were only a few miles from each other, and Colossae was both the oldest and the smallest of the three.

All indications point to the fact that the church in Colossae was the least important, as that expression is commonly understood, of any to which Paul's epistles were addressed. It is not definitely known when or by whom the church in Colossae was established; but from Col. 1: 6, 7 and 4: 12, 13 one would naturally infer that Epaphras took the lead in planting the church in that city. The expression "on our behalf" (Col. 1: 7) seems to imply that Paul directed the work of Epaphras in Colossae, and it is quite possible that the latter established the church there during Paul's long stay in Ephesus. As already observed, there is no indication that Paul ever visited Colossae, but it is quite obvious that he maintain a vital connection with the church there (cf. Col. 2: 1), and he seems to have kept himself informed regarding condi-

tions within the congregation (Col. 1: 3, 4; 2: 5).

The immediate occasion for writing the epistle to the Colossians was the report which Paul received from Epaphras regarding the conditions in the church in their city. (See Col. 1: 7; 8; 4: 12, 13.) This report was both favorable and unfavorable. The unfavorable part had to do with certain false teaching which was being done there, and which was greatly hindering the progress of the church. But judging from that which is said in the epistle itself, it is reasonable to conclude that, generally speaking, the Colossian brethren had remained true to the doctrine which they had been taught by Epaphras (cf. Col. 1: 4; 2: 5), yet it is evident that the danger of being led into error was sufficiently serious as to call forth this letter.

We have no direct knowledge of the false teaching which was being done in the church in Colossae; we can only infer as to its nature from that which is said in Paul's letter to them, and from that which is historically known regarding the general conditions in that section during those times. Phrygia was a favorable soil for the development of error. According to Bishop Lightfoot, "Cosmological speculation, mystic theosophy, religious fanaticism, all had their home there." It seems that the false teachers did not regard themselves as being enemies of Christianity, but only felt that they were enriching and enlarging its teaching. They accepted the truth of Christianity, but tried to add to it some deeper knowledge to which they claimed to have had access. Their theory is now known as *The Colossian Heresy* [1]

## The Golden Text

*"Many false prophets are gone out into the world."* This passage, since it has a direct bearing on the lesson now before us, should be read in the light of its full context. "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. You 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 that 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.)

The Epistle of John was written some twenty-five years after Paul wrote Colossians, and that fact should help us to appreciate John's statement regarding the antichrist, "whereof ye have heard that it cometh; and now it is in the world already." The Colossian heresy was the initial phase of that subtle philosophy which in the days of John's epistle was known as Gnosticism. This system was not merely a fantastic theory, or a frivolous speculation. On the contrary, it was a se-

rious effort, on the part of men, to solve an ancient and an abiding problem, that of the origin of evil. But, notwithstanding that motive, it was a pernicious heresy; and, had it prevailed, the truth of the gospel would have perished. As we shall notice further on in this study, this heresy denied that Christ came in the flesh, hence John's statement in verses 2 and 3, already quoted.

We in this age are not troubled with the same false teaching which is referred to in the lesson text, but the principle applies to any teaching which is contrary to the revealed will of God. Jesus warned against false teachers in his sermon on the mount (Matt. 7: 15-20), and he makes this direct application: "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 [that is, the judgment 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.) To "work iniquity" is to act without authority, so that anything which is said or done in the name of the Lord, which he did not authorize, is to be guilty of the sin in question; or, which is the same thing, to be a false prophet or teacher. 1 John 4: 6 tells how one may be sure of truth or error.

## The Text Explained

### Human Philosophy vs. the Deity of Christ

(Col. 2: 8-12)

*Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ: for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power: in whom ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with him*

*in baptism. wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.*

It has already been pointed out that the Colossian heresy was the initial phase of that subtle philosophy which in later years came to be known as Gnosticism; and how widely this heresy differed from Christianity appears in its very name. It was the doctrine of *gnosis* or "knowledge," and its advocates distinguished themselves from the simple multitude who only had "faith" by assuming the designation of "Gnostics." Thus, since it claimed for a select few the possession of a

superior acquaintance with truth, it tended toward the exclusive and the aristocratic. Vincents says that the form of error which prevailed in Colossae included three elements, namely, (1) Jewish formalism; (2) speculative mysticism, representing the germs of that which later developed into Gnosticism; and (3) Essenism, the medium through which the Jewish and Gnostic elements came into combination. This same author then says, "Though Gnosticism, as such, had not developed itself at this time, a knowledge of its principal features is necessary to an intelligent reading of this epistle."

The Gnostics denied the direct creation of the world by God himself, because, in their estimation, that would require that God be the creator of evil. Creation, according to their theory, was made possible through a series of emanations from God, each successive emanation being less divine, until the point was reached where contact with matter, which they regarded as being essentially evil, became possible. These emanations were called aeons, spirits, or angels, and they were worshipped with an affectation of humility in approaching the lower grades of deity, instead of venturing into the immediate presence of God himself.

Growing out of the idea that the bodies of men are evil matter, and could not therefore have been created by God, three extreme errors arose, namely, (1) that only by various ascetic practices, by which the body could be punished, could men hope to save their bodies (Col. 2: 20-23); (2) that since the body is essentially evil and its deeds were not to be accounted for, license therefore was to be granted for evil conduct, so that sinful passions were indulged in at pleasure and with impunity Col. 3: 5-10; and (3) since matter was essentially evil, there could not have been any true incarnation. Christ therefore, as they viewed the matter, was not God manifested in the flesh (Col. 1: 19-22).

All of these false theories conspired to limit the greatness and authority of Jesus Christ, and the redemption which was wrought through him. (Col. 2: 9,10.) The Colossian Christians were being led into the idea that, in seeking this mystic communion, that is, the "fulness" of religious

experience, or the sense of being filled with divine power, was to be found in communion, not *merely* with Christ, but with other heavenly powers as great as, or perhaps greater than, he. The poison of this heresy lay in its dualism, and it struck at the very foundation of the faith of the gospel. Instead of the incarnation—God manifested in the flesh—there was merely an aeon or angelic intermediary. This pernicious doctrine held that Jesus was not born of a virgin, but was the son of Joseph and Mary—a man like other men, but who in time became wiser and more righteous than others. It was further alleged that at his baptism, Christ descended into Jesus, coming as he did from God, and that following that event *Jesus* proclaimed the Father and wrought miracles. But as Jesus finished his mission, Christ withdrew from him, and Jesus then suffered and was raised up; but Christ being wholly spiritual has remained throughout unmoved and untouched. This distinction between the Divine Christ and the human Jesus who, according to the theory, were never truly one, but were merely associated together during the latter's three-year ministry, was the inevitable outcome of this theory. Untold mischief has resulted from this dual supposition. This is what John evidently referred to in 1 John 4: 1-3.

In reading the Epistle to the Colossians, we are impressed with the fact that Paul warned the brethren in Colossae against four different errors, which probably were the constituent parts of one system of philosophy which was being urged upon them. The four errors are: (1) a self-styled philosophy or *gnosis*, 2: 4, 8; (2) Jewish ritualism, 2: 11, 14, 16, 17; (3) angel worship, 2: 18; and (4) ascetic practices, 2: 20-23. The doctrine which is contained in the Epistle to the Colossians is the gospel restated in contrast with the philosophy of the Colossian heresy; and in presenting the truths contained in this letter. Paul set forth the grandest and fullest conception of the person and work of Christ which is known to us. Using the vocabulary of the heretics, the apostle told the Colossian brethren that in Christ "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." With reference to circumcision, he declared that in Christ



the way very foundation of the faith they "were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands." In speaking of the attractive symbols of the "mystery religions," Paul explained that in baptism they were buried with Christ, and were raised with him through faith, that is, their faith "in the working of God, who raised him from the dead." (Cf. Eph. 1: 19., 20—"to us-ward who believe.")

### Jewish Observances and the Worship of Angels Will Not Suffice

(Col. 2: 16-19)

*Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath day: which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ's. Let no man rob you of your prize by a voluntary humility and worshipping of the angels, dwelling in the things which he hath seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,, and not holding fast the Head, from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with increase of God.*

We must not lose sight of the fact that the Colossian heresy which Paul was combating in this letter consisted in the following elements of religious error: (1) Jewish formalism; (2) speculative mysticism, representing the germs of that which later developed into Gnosticism; and (3) Essenism, the medium through which the Jewish and Gnostic elements came into combination. In the verses between this section of the lesson text and the preceding one, Paul had called the Colossian brethren's attention to the fact that they had been made alive from their dead state in sin by Christ, apart from the law, which had been taken out of the way when he died on the cross; and that they therefore were under no further obligation to conform to the statutes of Moses, whether from the standpoint of the law itself, or from the ascetic regulations which the false teachers were urging upon them.

In commenting on this section of the text, The Expositor's Greek Testament says, "The connection with the preceding argument is this: Since the bond written in ordinances has been abolished, and the angelic powers spoiled and led in triumph, allow

no one to criticise your action on the ground that it is not in harmony with the precepts of the law, or cuts you off from communion with angels. You from communion with angels. You have nothing to do with law or angels. At best they were but the shadow, and in Christ you possess the substance. . . . The question is not altogether between the lawful and unlawful food, but between eating and drinking or abstinence. Asceticism rather than ritual cleanness is in his mind. The law is not ascetic in its character, its prohibitions of meats rests on the view that they are unclean, and drinks are not forbidden, save in exceptional cases, and then not for ascetic reasons. But these injunctions stand along with ordinances of the law itself, partly, because they may have been regarded as extensions of its principles, partly, we may suppose, because, like the law, they were attributed to the angels by the false teachers."

The great mistake which the perpetrators of the Colossian heresy were making was not "holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God." (Cf. Eph. 4: 11-16.) No amount of ascetic culture can possibly compensate for that which Christ has ordained for his people. And while we are not bothered today with the Colossian heresy, we are troubled in many instances by those who are not satisfied with the Lord's regulations for his people. When people hold fast the Head, they then may expect the body to grow and function as it should.

### Death with Christ Frees One from Worldly Ordinances

(Col. 2: 20-23)

*If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye s u b j e c t yourselves to ordinances, Handle not, nor taste, nor touch (all which things are to perish with the using), after the precepts and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body: but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.*

That the Colossian brethren had

died with Christ is implied from the fact that they were buried with him in baptism, and were also raised with him (verse 12), and the fact that they had been circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in putting off the body of the flesh, which was their former sinful state (cf. Eph. 2: 1-7), further implies that they were cut off from the ritualistic observances of the world. Why then, asks Paul, do you still subject yourselves to these worldly ordinances, such as, Handle not, nor taste, nor touch? All such practices are of men, and they will come to an end.

Lightfoot paraphrases this section of the lesson text in these words: "You died with Christ to your old life. All mundane relations have ceased for you. Why then do you—you who have attained your spiritual manhood—submit still to the rudimentary discipline of children? Why do you—you who are citizens of heaven—bow your necks afresh to the tyranny of material ordinances, as though you were still living in the world? It is the same old story again; the same round of hard, meaningless, vexatious prohibitions. *Handle not, Taste not, Touch not.* What folly! When all these things—these meats and drinks and the like—are earthly, perishable, wholly trivial and unimportant! They are used, and there is an end of them. What is this but to draw down upon yourselves the denunciations uttered by the prophet of old? What is this but to abandon God's word for precepts which are issued by human authority and inculcated by human teachers? All such things have a show of wisdom, I grant. There is an efficacious parade of religious devotion, an eager affectation of humil-

ity; there is a stern ascetic rigor which ill-treats the body, but there is nothing of any real value to check indulgence of the flesh."

The original word for "will-worship" means, according to Thayer, "worship which one devises and prescribes for himself, contrary to the contents and nature of the faith which ought to be directed to Christ; said of the misdirected zeal and practices of ascetics: Col. 2: 23." Arndt-Gingrich call it "self-made religion, perhaps, would-be religion." The original word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. Its meaning is clear, as it respected the heretics of Paul's day, and its application is just as clear and pertinent, as it respects the people today who are not satisfied to remain loyal to that which Christ teaches. Professed Christians today do not hesitate to prescribe anything which they want in their worship; and they seem to think that because it is so beautiful and impressive in their own sight, that God, too, must be pleased with it.

The kind of attitude which has just been mentioned has characterized people through the years, especially with reference to mechanical instrumental music in the worship. Such practices "have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship" (for that is exactly what they are); but they are not of any value in the sight of God, if we may judge by such statements as those found in John 4: 24 and Rom. 16: 17. When people learn to hold fast the Head of the church, and make sure that they are doing that which he says, instead of devising and prescribing for themselves, to use the words of Thayer, they can be certain that they are on the right road.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Where was the city of Colossae located?  
Under what circumstances was the church in that city probably established?  
How did Paul come to write the letter to the Colossians?  
In what way had the church in Colossae probably reacted to the false teaching there?  
Why are some places more susceptible to false teaching than others?  
What did the error which was being taught in Colossae come to be known?

### The Golden Text

Discuss the setting of the golden text.  
What is the connection between John's statement and the Colossian heresy?  
What is the benefit of this teaching for us?  
What did Jesus say regarding false teachers?  
What does it mean to work iniquity?

### Human philosophy vs. the Deity of Christ

How did the advocates of the Colossian heresy regard themselves?  
What were the principle ingredients of the system of error which they taught?  
Why is it necessary to understand something of the heresy in order to understand that which Paul wrote to the Colossian brethren?

What did they teach regarding the creation of the world?

What three extreme errors did they advocate on the assumption that the bodies of men are evil?

What general effect did the Colossian heresy have on the gospel of Christ?

What was their attitude toward the scriptural teaching regarding the incarnation?

In their opinion, how were Jesus and Christ related?

Against what four types of error did Paul warn the Colossian brethren?

In doing this, what was the result of his teaching regarding Christ?

With the vocabulary of the heretics in mind, what did Paul say to the Colossians?

#### Jewish Observances and the Worship of Angels Will Not Suffice

Why did Paul warn the Colossians with reference to matters contained in the law of Moses?

What use did the heretics make of the Jewish ordinances?

Why did they want to worship angels?

What great mistakes did the advocates of the heresy make?

What does it mean to hold fast to the head?

What is the benefit of this teaching to us today?

#### Death with Christ Frees One from Worldly Ordinances

How do we know that the Colossian Christians had died with Christ?

What does it mean to die from the rudiments of the world?

What were some of the ordinances of the world to which the Colossian brethren were subjecting themselves?

In what way did the ritualistic worship of the heretics have a show of wisdom?

What did Paul say regarding the value of their system of worship?

What is the meaning of "will-worship"?

In what way is the principle of such worship applicable to our day?

Give some examples of this application.

How do we know that such worship does not please God?

What is the only way to avoid such errors in worship?

## Lesson VI—May 10, 1964

### CHRIST, OUR LIFE

#### Lesson Text

##### Col. 3: 1-15

1 If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God.

2 Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth.

3. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

4 When Christ, *who is* our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory.

5 Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry;

6 For which things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience;

7 Wherein ye also once walked, when ye lived in these things:

8 But now do ye also put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth:

9 Lie not one to another; seeing

that ye have put off the old man with his doings,

10 And have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him:

11 Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scyth'-i-an, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all.

12 Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy, and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering;

13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye:

14 And above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness.

15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which also ye were called in one body; and be ye thankful.

Golden Text.—"And, put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth." (Eph. 4: 24.)

Devotional Reading.—Col. 1: 1-8.

## Daily Bible Readings

May 4. M.....	New Life in Christ (2 Cor. 5: 10-17)
May 5. T.....	Buried Into Death, Raised to Life (Rom. 6: 1-11)
May 6. W.....	Gospel Produces Life (Luke 8: 9-15)
May 7. T.....	Begotten Through the Gospel (1 Cor. 4: 14-21)
May 8. F.....	Babes in Christ (1 Pet. 2: 1-5)
May 9. S.....	Food Adapted to All (Heb. 5: 11-14)
May 10. S.....	Characteristics of the New Life (Eph. 4: 17-32)

TIME.—A.D. 62.

PLACE.—Rome.

PERSONS.—Paul and the brethren to whom he wrote.

## Introduction

In the very beginning of time, as we know it, "Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." (Gen. 2: 7.) This was not the beginning of life, but only the beginning of human life. Life is an attribute of God, and it is only from him that life can come. In his address to the men of Athens, Paul said, "The God that made the world and all things therein, he, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is he served by men's hands as though he needed anything, seeing he himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and he 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." (Acts 17: 24-28a.)

Two of the important lessons we learn from Paul's statement are (1) man received his life from God, and (2) God placed him on the earth for a purpose. In the words of Rousseau, "To live is not merely to breathe, it is to act; it is to make use of our organs, senses, faculties, of all those parts of ourselves which give us the feeling of existence." And so Seneca says, "I will govern my life and thoughts as if the whole world were to see the one and to read the other, for what does it signify to make any-

thing a secret to my neighbor, when to God, who is the searcher of our hearts, all our privacies are open?" Some one has said, "Life is divided into three terms—that which was, which is, and which will be. Let us learn from the past to profit by the present, and from the present to live better for the future;" for, as Socrates observes, "The end of life is to be like God, and the soul following God will be like him."

When Jesus delivered his lesson on The Good Shepherd, he said, "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly." (John 10: 10 b.) This is enough to show that it is not enough for man simply to live, that is, exist: he must have the abundant life, if he is to meet with God's expectation for him. Our true life is fellowship with God. The life which Christ is, and which he communicates to others, is the life which fills our whole being and results in active fellowship with the Father. On the night of the Lord's betrayal, he prayed, "And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." (John 17: 3.) Some one has said that this knowledge by which we are to live is a knowledge which grows: not truth given and mastered once for all, but truth to be illuminated and interpreted by the ever increasing sum of experience. Thus the coming of Christ, the incarnation, binds together two worlds, and makes the earthly with all of its workings a symbol, so to speak, of the heavenly.

## The Golden Text

*"And put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth."* These are the closing words of a

paragraph in which Paul exhorted some Christian people to demonstrate their Christianity. "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord,

that ye no longer walk as the Gentiles also walk, in the vanity of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart; who being past feeling gave themselves up to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye did not so learn Christ; if so be that ye heard him, and were taught in him, even as truth is in Jesus: that ye put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, that waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit; and that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth." (Eph. 4: 17-24.)

The exhortation in the verses just quoted is in keeping with the admonition in verse 1 of the same chapter, where Paul says, "I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called." In the passage from which the golden text is taken, Paul shows in detail what he means by walking worthily of the calling wherewith they were called. No one can have Christ as his life, unless he has a direct connection with him; and it is for that reason that we should consider the apostle's statement regarding the Gentiles in the passage now under consideration. Their estrangement from God had resulted in spiritual death, for God, who is himself life, as has already been pointed out, is the only source of the life of his creatures. The estrangement of the Gentiles from God was due to their ignorance, as Paul states; but that ignorance was not excusable, for "they refused to have God in their knowledge." (Rom. 1: 28.) This refusal produced a hardening (being past feeling), and resulted

in all kinds of sinful practices. "But ye did not so learn Christ." They must put off the old man, be renewed in the spirit of their mind, and put on the new man, which was created by God. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 17; Tit. 3:5 .) In commenting on the process, Bruce says,

"The old man is what they were before they became Christians, the old Adam which is our natural heritage. In Rom. 6: 6 Paul enlarges on the meaning of baptism, in which Christians are 'buried' with Christ and thus 'united with him by the likeness of his death,' by affirming that 'our old man was crucified with him.' In Col. 3: 9 he reminds his readers that they 'have put off the old man with his doings.' But in the present passage Christians, who (in the sense of these quotations from other epistles) have already had their 'old man' crucified with Christ and so have already 'put him off,' are exhorted to put him off. The Christian ethic in the New Testament presents a remarkable blend of the indicative and the imperative moods; it might be summed up in these words: 'Be what you are'—'Be in practice what you are by divine calling!' God had called these people out of the old life into the new, and this transition had been symbolized in their baptism, at the very threshold of their Christian career; but the significance of their baptism must be spelt out in daily living. Let that daily living proclaim in another way: their decisive farewell to all that they had formerly been. This tension between the indicative and the imperative arises from the fact that while the believer is spiritually united to Christ at God's right hand and belongs to the age to come, yet temporally, so long as he remains in mortal body, he lives on earth and is involved in this present age."

## The Text Explained

### The Golden Secret of Progress

(Col. 3: 1-4)

*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.*

This section of the lesson text must be understood in the light of that which Paul says in verses 12 and 20 of the preceding chapter. After having put off the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ, that is, after having repented of their sins,

they were "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." (Verse 12.) And then, "If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye subject yourselves to ordinances?" (Verse

20.) It was in connection with the statements just made that Paul warned the Colossians against the false philosophies and erroneous teaching to which they were being subject, and which, in effect, belong to *this* world. And when we come to the lesson text now before us, it can easily be seen that the apostle is raising the discussion to higher ground, and is placing the problem with which he was dealing in its eternal context.

One of the most significant failures which characterize the average Christian today, is with reference to the recognition of the nature of the life which is his in Christ. When Paul wrote his letter to the Romans, he said, "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*" (Rom. 6: 4.) The expression "newness of life" is a much stronger phrase than "new life." The life which the risen child of God has in Christ is a new kind or quality of life—it is the life which God imparts to him; and it is eternal in its nature. God makes those who obey the gospel alive with Christ; and it is this life which has the quality of endurance. And if it is maintained as God intends that it should be, it will never be taken away from its possessor.

In his conversation with Martha regarding the passing of Lazarus, Jesus said, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall *never* die. Believeth thou this?" (John 11: 25, 26.) The life which is ours in Christ is as eternal as is Christ himself; for, as the text now under consideration affirms, Christ is our life. It is regrettable that so many of us think of eternal life as something which we can have, only when this earthly pilgrimage is over. This view of eternal life, of

course, thinks of it only in terms of *endurance*, and completely ignores its *qualitative* aspect. The Bible nowhere teaches that the life which we are now considering is ours *eternally*, while we are still in the flesh; but the Scriptures just as clearly teach that we do have an eternal quality of life, that is, a life which is eternal in its nature, here and now. "These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God." (1 John 5: 13.)

The lesson which we need to learn here is that we have something which is worth keeping, something which both deserves and requires our very best efforts. We have a treasure in Christ—our life—which can never be destroyed, that is, annihilated; and if we will keep this truth always before us, we will do our best to hold on to it. It can, of course, be destroyed in the sense of being lost in hell (cf. 2 Thess. 1: 7-9); but even there it will still be in existence. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning his Son. And the witness is this, that God *gave unto us eternal life*, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life." (1 John 5: 10-12.)

#### Sins to Be Avoided

(Col. 3: 5-11)

*Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry; for which things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience: wherein ye also once walked, when ye lived in these things; but now do ye also put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth: lie not one to another; seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him: where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all.*

After having repudiated the false asceticism of the Colossian heresy, which sought to bring the life of the Christian in subjection to a set of external regulations, such as, "Handle no, nor taste, nor touch (all which things are to perish with the using)," Paul, in the section of the lesson text now before us, proceeds to demand a far more radical denial of self, than they apparently had thought of. Instead of merely regulating their earthbound life by the observance of human ordinances, the apostle calls on the Lord's people to dig out by the roots and utterly destroy "your members which are upon the earth." This is in keeping with the idea of their having put off the old man, and having put on the new man. If the lives of Christian people are going to continue to be characterized by the same sinful thoughts and practices which were theirs before coming into covenant relationship with the Lord, then what is the advantage of making the change in relationship? If any one is in doubt about the meaning of any the terms which Paul uses in the text now under consideration, he can easily inform himself by consulting an English dictionary. Practically all of the words in the paragraph are well understood by the average person. (Cf. Eph. 4: 17-32; Gal. 5: 16-21.)

The motive behind the drastic action which Paul called upon the Colossian brethren to take, and the principle, of course, applies to all Christians, is this, "Seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man, *that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him.*" This is another way of setting forth the basic steps in conversion. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians he said "Wherefore if any man is in Christ he is a new creature [there is a new creation, margin]: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new." (2 Cor. 5: 17.) This is when the "new way" of living, referred to in Rom. 6: 4, begins. The same general idea is found in Tit. 3: 5, "Not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and the *renewing* of the Holy Spirit."

The original word for "renewing"

in the passage just quoted, is *anakainosis* which, in turn, is from *anakainoo*. This root word, in its various forms, is found in the New Testament only in the writings of Paul. As already noted, its use in Tit. 3: 5 has reference to the spiritual rebirth, whereby one becomes a Christian (cf. John 3: 5; 2 Cor. 5: 17); but in such passages as Col. 3:10; Rom. 12: 2; 2 Cor. 4: 16, the idea is that of a continuous growth and development of the child of God himself. Although one becomes a new creature when he is born again, or converted to Christ, that is not the end of the matter. He is expected to strive, from that day and onward, to become like "the image of him that created him." (Cf. Gen. 1: 26, 27.) It is only by this continuous renewal that one can come to have the true knowledge of God. (Cf. 2 Cor. 2: 18.) Instead of emphasizing racial, religious, cultural, and social differences, which characterized the world and former dispensations, Christians must remember that "Christ is all, and in all."

### Virtues to Be Cultivated

(Col. 3: 12-17)

*Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye: and above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which also ye were called in one body; and be ye thankful.*

Those who are familiar with the writings of Paul will readily recognize the fact that the apostle follows the same plan in writing to the Colossians, that he did in the Galatian letter, that is, positive traits of Christian character are placed over against, and take the place of, the destructive sins which must be rooted out and destroyed, if one is to be acceptable to God. (Cf. Gal. 5: 16-24.) This basic truth is set forth in many parts of the New Testament. It will not do much good for one to root out the evil, if he does not replace it with good. No better commentary on this point can be found than the illustration which Jesus gave. "But the un-

clean 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 becometh worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this evil generation." (Matt. 12: 43-45.)

The lesson which the parable just quoted teaches is obvious. After getting rid of thoughts, habits, and ways of living which are wrong and degrading, 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. Titus 2: 11, 12.) Uprooting sins is to be commended, provided that the one so doing sets out at once to grow virtues in their place. Righteousness is not merely the absence of evil; it also involves the doing of that which God commands. If one merely cleans the weeds out of a field and prepares the ground without planting good seed, he only invites a new crop of weeds, briars, et cetera. 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. To express the same thing in another

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

The picture which Paul suggests in the paragraph from which the third section of the lesson text is taken, is that of a man who is putting on his clothing. After mentioning several items, he then says, "And above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness." In other words, love is that part of one's apparel which holds all the other in place. The great importance of love is further stated by Paul in these words: "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." (1 Cor. 13: 1-3.) If love is not the overruling principle in our lives, then our other virtues will amount to nothing. For example, if forgiveness is not full and complete, that is, from the heart and motivated by love, then we might as well not bother with the other virtues which Paul mentions. The Christian must do all that he can to bring about and maintain fellowship in the body of Christ; and be thankful for the opportunity of doing so.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What does the Bible teach regarding the origin of life?  
How should this truth make every thoughtful person feel toward God?  
What two important lessons do we learn from Paul's address in Athens?  
What is the true meaning of life?  
How should every one feel about the life he is now living?  
What is the great purpose which God has for all of his people?  
Why shouldn't any one be content with merely living?

### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances did Paul write the words of the golden text?  
What is the "new man" which Christians are to put on?  
How is he described in the text now under consideration?

How does one go about putting on the new man?

### The Golden Secret of Progress

In what light are we to understand the first section of the lesson text for today?  
What was Paul's purpose in making the statements of verses 12 and 20 of chapter 2?  
On what kind of an evaluation did Paul place this part of his discussion?  
What significant failure characterizes many professed Christians today?  
What is the nature of the life which we have in Christ?  
What two aspects of our life as Christians are often confused?  
What lesson, then, do we need to learn about our "new life" in Christ?  
How does one come into possession of the life now under consideration?

### Sins to Be Avoided

How were the false teachers in Colossae seeking to regulate the life of the brethren there?



In what way did Paul deal with the problem?  
 Discuss the sins which Paul told the Colossians to avoid.  
 Why is it essential to get rid of such sins?  
 In what way does Paul picture conversion to Christ?  
 In what senses does he use the term "renew"?  
 What is the goal of this continuous renewal?  
 Where does Paul say that the emphasis should be placed?

#### Virtues to Be Cultivated

What plan did Paul usually follow in dealing with the questions of sins versus virtues?

Discuss the prevalence of the basic truth herein set forth.  
 In what way did Jesus illustrate it?  
 What is the obvious lesson which he taught?  
 How is it related to the question now before us?  
 In what does righteousness consist?  
 In what way did Paul present the lesson of this section of the text?  
 What is the place and purpose of love in this connection?  
 How does this emphasis on love affect such questions as forgiveness and unity?  
 What is the Christian attitude in all of this?

## Lesson VII—May 17, 1964

### PAUL WRITES TO HIS FRIEND PHILEMON

#### Lesson Text

#### Phile. 4-19

4 I thank my God always, making mention of thee in my prayers,

5 Hearing of thy love, and of the faith which thou hast toward the Lord Je'-sus, and toward all the saints;

6 That the fellowship of thy faith may become effectual, in the knowledge of every good thing which is in you, unto Christ.

7 For I had much joy and comfort in thy love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through thee, brother.

8 Wherefore, though I have all boldness in Christ to enjoin thee that which is befitting,

9 Yet for love's sake I rather beseech, being such a one as Paul the aged, and now a prisoner also of Christ Je'-sus:

10 I beseech thee for my child, whom I have begotten in my bonds, O-nes'-i-mus,

11 Who once was unprofitable to thee, but now is profitable to thee and to me:

12 Whom I have sent back to thee

in his own person, that is, my very heart:

13 Whom I would fain have kept with me, that in thy behalf he might minister unto me in the bonds of the gospel:

14 But without thy mind I would do nothing; that thy goodness should not be as of necessity, but of free will.

15 For perhaps he was therefore parted from *thee* for a season, that thou shouldest have him for ever;

16 No longer as a servant, but more than a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much rather to thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

17 If then thou countest me a partner, receive him as myself.

18 But if he hath wronged thee at all, or oweth *thee* aught, put that to mine account;

19 I Paul write it with mine own hand, I will repay it: that I say not unto thee that thou owest to me even thine own self besides.

**Golden Text.**—*"Having confidence in thine obedience I write unto thee, knowing that thou wilt do even beyond what I say"* (Phile. 21.)

**Devotional Reading.**—Phile. 1-3.

#### Daily Bible Readings

May 11. M..... Onesimus, A Beloved Brother (Col. 4: 7-9)  
 May 12. T..... Duties of Masters to Servants (Eph. 6: 9; Col. 4: 1)  
 May 13. W..... Duties of Servants to Masters (Eph. 6: 5-8)  
 May 14. T..... Salvation (Phile. 1: 1-3)  
 May 15. F..... Paul's Confidence in Philemon (Phile. 20, 21)  
 May 16. S..... Paul's Anticipated Visit (Phile. 22)  
 May 17. S..... Greetings to Philemon and Others (Phile. 23-25)

TIME.—A.D. 62.

PLACE.—Rome

PERSONS.—Paul, Philemon, and Onesimus.

## Introduction

The Epistle to Philemon is the only purely personal letter which has come down to us from the pen of Paul. The only other letter in the New Testament which may be considered a parallel to it in this respect, is Third John, unless Second John may be so regarded. If the "elect lady" of Second John was an individual, then that epistle may be classed with Philemon and Third John as a private letter; but if the expression stood for a church, then the letter could not be regarded as a private communication.

Philemon, the person to whom Paul wrote the epistle we are to consider in this study, lived in Colossae (cf. Col. 4: 9, 17; Phile. 2, 10-12), and was evidently a man of some ability and influence. He was a member of the church in that city, and it appears that the church there met in his house. (See Phile. 2.) One would naturally infer, from Phile. 19, that Philemon was converted by Paul, and that may have taken place in Ephesus, during the apostle's long stay in that city (cf. Acts 19: 10, 26),

since it seems from Col. 2: 1 that Paul was not personally acquainted in Colossae. (Cf. Col. 1: 6, 7.) As a result of their former relationship, a very close personal attachment had grown up between Paul and Philemon, which had blossomed into a beautiful Christian friendship.

The occasion for Paul's writing the letter we are to study today to his friend was briefly this: Philemon possessed a slave by the name of Onesimus who had run away from him and had gone to Rome. Onesimus, while in that city, came under the influence of Paul, and was converted to Christianity. It would have pleased Paul if Onesimus could have remained with him, so that he might minister unto him in the bonds of the gospel; but he knew that his new son in the faith, in fulfillment of his Christian duty, would have to return to his master and make things right with him. Paul, accordingly, sent Onesimus back to Colossae, evidently in company with, and under the escort of, Tychicus, who carried the letter now under consideration to Philemon.

## The Golden Text

*"Having confidence in thine obedience I write unto thee, knowing that thou wilt do even beyond what I say "* In commenting on this passage of scripture, J. W. Shepherd says, "In verse 8 he had waived his right to enjoin, for he had rather appeal through love and request. But here he sounds the note of authority and then passes to affection and trust. He here uses the word obedience, and in such a way as to connect it with love and the privilege of his friends. He trusts Philemon's obedience because he knows his love and is sure it is love of such devotion that it will not stand on the exact measure, but will delight to do even more than is asked. Men will do much to fulfil generous expectations. When love enjoins, there will be trust in its tones, and it will act like a magnet to draw into duty and obedience. A heart truly touched by the love of Christ never seeks to know the lowest limit of duty, but the highest possibility of service."

Paul's method in dealing with Philemon is a good example of the application of practical psychology; and it shows a thorough understanding of both human nature and the spirit of Christ. When those who are seeking to get something accomplished, and especially when the will of another person is involved, it is much more effective to manifest an attitude of good will and noble expectation; because of the strong appeal which they will generate. Most people enjoy having others think well of them, and when they are made to realize that such a feeling also raises high expectations of them, they will the more readily respond to the requests which are made of them; for it is only in that way that they can maintain the high level of their dignity. One has only to read the eighth and ninth chapters of Second Corinthians in order to see that Paul used the same principle in dealing with churches, that he employed in the case of Philemon.

The words "knowing that thou wilt do even beyond what I say" suggest the spirit of the second mile. Service which is the result of compulsion alone is but the expression of a law. So long as men do only that which is demanded of them, they are not living in terms of their possibilities; and it is certain that no one who has studied the New Testament would contend that the Lord is pleased with less than that which one *can* do. (Cf. Luke 17: 7-10.) It is only when people rise above the legal standard—

when spontaneity takes the place of coercion—that service becomes rich and character noble. The call of Christianity is to a strenuous life of willing service beyond the fulfillment of obligatory duty. Or, to state the same thing in another way, it is not until a man's willingness overflows his obligation, so that what he is required to do is seen as a segment in the circle of that which he is willing to do, does he become what Jesus would call a profitable servant.

## The Text Explained

### Thanksgiving for Philemon's Love and Faith

(Phile. 4-7)

*I thank my God always, making mention of thee in my prayers, hearing of thy love, and of the faith which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all the saints; that the fellowship of thy faith may become effectual, in the knowledge of every good thing which is in you, unto Christ. For I had much joy and comfort in thy love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through thee, brother.*

It was, of course, only natural for Paul to be thankful for every good thing; for he was a thoughtful man. The words "thank" and "think" are from the same Anglo-Saxon root, and the difference in their spelling is limited to a single letter. Thankful people are thoughtful people; and thoughtful people are, in turn, thankful people. Paul never found it difficult to be thankful; for he could see and think of so many things to arouse in him the spirit of gratitude. This would be especially true in the case of a Christian brother, and one who was continuously manifesting the spirit of Christ.

And, too, Paul told Philemon that he remembered him in his prayers, and this, of course, made the latter grateful; for any faithful Christian appreciates the fact that others are praying for him. Those who read the epistles of Paul are aware of the fact that he was a praying man, and that he frequently asked others to pray for him, while he assured them that he was praying for them. Ten-nyson observes that

More things are wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of. Where-  
fore, let thy voice  
Rise like a fountain for me night  
and day.  
For what are men better than  
sheep or goats  
That nourish a blind life within  
the brain,  
If, knowing God, they lift not  
hands of prayer  
Both for themselves and those who  
call them friend?

Prayer is in order always (cf. 1 Thess. 5: 17; Rom. 12: 12), and especially so when one is confronted with a problem, such as Paul had before him when he wrote his letter to Philemon. The apostle wanted to reach the heart of his beloved brother in Christ, and what would be more effective than to go to God in prayer about? James tells us that "the supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working." (James 5: 16.)

Paul prayed specifically that the fellowship of Philemon's faith "may become effectual, in the knowledge of every good thing which is in you, unto Christ." Bible students differ widely in their understanding of just what Paul meant by this statement, as may be seen from the following translations: I pray that their participation in your loyal faith they may have a vivid sense of how much good we Christians can attain." (Moffatt.) "And I pray that through coming to know every good thing about us as Christians they may effectually share your faith." (Goodspeed.) "And I pray that those who share your faith may also share your knowledge of all the good things that believing in Jesus can mean to us." (Phillips.)

"And I pray that their sharing of your faith may result in their recognition in us of everything that is right with reference to Christ." (Williams.) "My prayer is that your fellowship with us in our common faith may deepen the understanding of all the blessings that our union with Christ brings us." (The New English Bible.) "And I pray that the sharing of your faith may promote the knowledge of all the good that is ours in Christ." (Revised Standard Version.)

The Interpreter's Bible suggests two possible interpretations, namely,

(1) "that your active participation in the partnership of faith may be stimulated by what you come to know of the good we are doing in Christ," and

(2) "that your full sharing of yourself with your fellow Christians may be stimulated by a recognition of how much good is ours in Christ." James MacKnight paraphrases the passages in these words: "Also I pray, that the communication of the fruits of thy faith to the saints, in the many good offices which thou dost to them, may be effectual for bringing others to the acknowledgment of every good disposition, which is in you toward the members of Christ." But whatever may have been in Paul's mind when he penned verse 6 of the text now under consideration, his aim was to commend Philemon and thereby to win his good will; for "I had much joy and comfort in thy love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through thee, brother." Lipscomb notes that "in this place the title 'brother' has a peculiar appropriateness, for Paul had been speaking of the love of Philemon, which made him a brother indeed to all the spiritual family of God." This would naturally bring Philemon to the realization that he was also a brother to Onesimus.

Paul's Plea for Onesimus

(Phile. 8-14)

*Wherefore, though I have all boldness in Christ to enjoin thee that which is befitting, yet for love's sake I rather beseech, being such a one as Paul the aged, and now a prisoner also of Christ Jesus: I beseech thee for my child, whom I have begotten in my bonds, Onesimus, who once was unprofitable to thee, but now is profitable to thee and to me: whom*

*I have sent back to thee in his own person, that is, my very heart: whom I would fain have kept with me, that in thy behalf he might minister unto me in the bonds of the gospel: but without thy mind I would do nothing; that thy goodness should not be as of necessity, but of free will.*

In commenting on Paul's letter to Philemon, The Expositor's Greek Testament says, "Nothing could exceed the affectionate tactfulness in which St. Paul combines the appeal to all that is best in Philemon with a gentle, yet distinct assertion of his own authority (see vv. 8, 9, 21) is very striking. The epistle is a witness to the high demands which Christianity makes upon men; and the way in which it teaches the universal brotherhood of men together with the eternal truth that one man is better—or worse—and that therefore class distinctions lie within the nature of things; this is another side of its permanent value. The power of the gospel and the noble character of St. Paul are the two notes sounded throughout; or, as Lightfoot so well expresses it, the special value of the epistle lies in the fact that 'nowhere is the social influence of the gospel more strikingly exerted, nowhere does the nobility of the apostle's character receive a more vivid illustration than in this accidental pleading on behalf of a runaway slave.' "

We do not know how Onesimus came under the influence of Paul, but we do know that when once he was brought under the power of the gospel, he would have to be a different person, if he was to be acceptable to God. The Speaker's Bible points out that Onesimus was not very long a Christian before he found himself faced with a strait gate and a narrow way. That is a common experience for all who accept the way of righteousness, and Christ has made it plain that all men should expect not only a strait gate and a narrow way, but that they will always have the shadow of the cross over them. Becoming a Christian does not free one from difficulties; for Christ creates just as many difficulties as he solves, and he sets before his people just as many problems as he solves. However, there is this difference: the difficulties and problems which Christ creates by the demands which he makes upon us are not the sordid,

miserable kind which we make for ourselves by our selfish entanglements of the world. The problems and difficulties which Christ creates for his people are the kind which, when they are properly dealt with and solved, lift them up to a higher plane on their way to God.

One of the first problems which confronted Onesimus was this: he must return to his master, and do his best to right every wrong which he had created, even if it should cause him to suffer at the hands of Philemon, as well as to face the sneers and shame of the people in Colossae. Or, to express the same thing in another way, Onesimus had to learn that the forgiveness which God bestowed upon him does not remove the consequences of sin. That which God does for us does not lessen our responsibility to do our part in making right that which we are able to correct. We must face the situation into which sin has brought us, but we can always count on the help of God when we show a determination to do the best we can. There are, of course, some things which we cannot undo; but we can make an effort to correct those things which are within our power to make right.

It is hardly possible for us to realize the significance of Paul's pleading for Onesimus, without some understanding of the customs of that day with respect to slaves. It is true that Philemon was a Christian, and Paul was counting heavily upon his manifesting the spirit of Christ; but not every professed Christian, as we know all too well today, always manifests the proper attitude toward "their inferiors" (?). Vincent says that the attitude of the law of Paul's day regarding the slave was expressed in the formula *the slave has no right*. The master's power was unlimited. He might mutilate, torture, or kill the slave at his pleasure. Pollio, in the time of Augustus, ordered a slave to be thrown into a pond of voracious lampreys, Augustus interfered, but afterward ordered a slave of his own to be crucified on the mast of a ship for eating a favorite quail. Juvenal describes a profligate woman ordering a slave to be crucified, and when some one remonstrated, she replied, "So then a slave is a man, is he! 'He has done nothing,' you say. Granted.

I command it. Let my pleasure stand for a reason (VI., 219)." Martial records an instance of a master cutting out a slave's tongue. The old Roman legislation imposed death for killing a plough-ox; but the murderer of a slave was not called to account. Tracking fugitive slaves was a trade. Recovered slaves were branded on the forehead, condemned to double labor, and sometimes thrown to the beasts in the amphitheatre. The slave population was enormous. Some proprietors had as many as twenty thousand.

Are we surprised, then, at Paul's effort to soften the heart of Philemon by the letter which he sent to his friend, along with the returning Onesimus? If the apostle was correct in his estimate of his friend in Colossae, then the runaway slave would not be mistreated; but that remained to be seen. But at any rate Paul completely identified himself with Onesimus, and if his master was not willing to manifest the spirit of Christ toward him, then it would be necessary for Paul suffer too.

#### The Issue Clearly Drawn (Phile. 15-19)

*For perhaps he was therefore parted from thee for a season, that thou shouldest have him for ever; no longer as a servant, but more than a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me., but how much rather to thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord. If then thou countest me a partner, receive him as myself. But if he hath wronged thee at all, or oweth thee aught, put that to mine account; I Paul write it with mine own hand, I will repay it: that I say not unto thee that thou owest to me even thine own self besides.*

Vincent also points out the fact that the Epistle to Philemon has always been celebrated as a model of Christian tact and courtesy. Paul waived his apostolic right to command, and threw himself upon the appeal of Christian friendship, and backed it with a delicate allusion to his sufferings for the gospel's sake. Without palliating Onesimus' fault, he threw around him the protection of his own confidence and esteem. He softened the phrases which describe the slave's flight and possible theft. He does not say "he ran away," but

perhaps he was "parted from thee for a season." He does not say "he stole," but "if he hath wronged thee at all, or oweth thee ought." With exquisite tact he assumes that Philemon will regard Onesimus' ministries to the prisoner as his own, and will rejoice in them as an expression of his own affection. In short, he assumed full responsibility for his child in the faith, and pled for full and free forgiveness.

What does the average Christian do when some one who has wronged him tries to correct his mistakes? The teaching of Jesus on this subject is found in such passages of scripture as Matt. 5: 23-26; 18: 15-17; cf. Eph. 4: 28, 31, 32.

It should be observed that Paul did not in this epistle, nor anywhere else, as for that matter, attack slavery as an institution. He did not command, or even suggest, that Philemon free his slave. But he did teach a spirit which moderated the harshness of the system, and which would ultimately destroy it by peaceful means. Paul

relied upon the spirit of the gospel, the principles which it sets forth, namely, that all men are brethren in Christ and alike servants of one heavenly Master, to destroy the whole institution. There are many things in our relations today between man and man and class and class which are wrong and unchristian; but they are not beyond the reach of the power of Christianity. The way to correct these evils is not to break them down from without by the stroke of revolution, but to bring the spirit of Christ and the gospel message to bear upon them; for in no other way can the social relations we so greatly desire be achieved. It is the living breath of Christian good-will which we so desperately need today. Nothing else will heal the divisions between individuals, classes, and nations. The lack of it has caused every effort which men have made to improve these unhappy conditions to fail. If we will allow the new spirit to come in, it will create the new channels for new relationships.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

What is the nature of the epistle to Philemon?

What other New Testament letter or letters compare with it in this respect?

Who was Philemon and where did he live?

Why did Paul write to him?

### The Golden Text

Why did Paul say that he had confidence in Philemon's obedience?

What does such obedience imply?

What lesson should we learn from this in dealing with people and problems today?

Why is it easier to get people to act from such a motive?

What further lesson do Paul's words to Philemon suggest?

What is the spirit of the second mile?

### Thanksgiving for Philemon's Love and

#### Faith

Why was Paul always a thankful man?

What particular application did his thankfulness have toward Philemon?

Why did Paul say that he remembered Philemon in prayer?

What lesson should this have for us?

For what special thing in connection with Philemon did Paul pray?

What is the significance of the term "brother" in this connection?

### Paul's Pleas for Onesimus

What general impression does Paul's letter to Philemon make?

What are the two principle notes which are sounded throughout the epistle?

What change had come to Onesimus since he left Philemon?

Why was it essential that he return to his master in Colossae?

What does Christ want all people who come to him to understand?

Distinguish between our problems and those Christ creates for us.

What lesson did Onesimus have to learn regarding the forgiveness which comes from God?

What is the difference between the release from the guilt of sin and its consequences?

Why is it essential to understand something of the conditions regarding slavery in Paul's day, in order to see the significance of his plea for Onesimus?

How did the people of that day feel toward slaves?

What does this enable us to see regarding Paul's effort toward creating the proper attitude on the part of Philemon?

### The Issue Clearly Drawn

In what way did Paul present the case of Onesimus to Philemon?

What is the practical application of this study to our day?

What was Paul's attitude toward the question of slavery?

Why didn't he make a direct attack on the system?

How does he differ from us in this respect?

What is the only certain way to bring about better social conditions?

Lesson VIII—May 24, 1964

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH HIS SON

Lesson Text

Heb. 1: 1-8; 2: 1-4

1 God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners,

2 Hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in *his* Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds;

3 Who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

4 Having become by so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they.

5 For unto which of the angels said he at any time,

Thou art my Son,

This day have I begotten thee?

and again,

I will be to him a Father,

And he shall be to me a Son?

6 And when he again bringeth in the firstborn into the world he saith,

And let all the angels of God worship him.

7 And of the angels he saith,  
Who maketh his angels winds,  
And his ministers a flame of fire:

8 But of the Son *he saith*,  
Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever;

And the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

1 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away *from them*.

2 For if the word spoken through angels proved stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward;

3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard;

4 God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will.

Golden Text.—*"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."* (Matt. 17: 5.)

Devotional Reading.—Heb. 1: 9-13.

Daily Bible Readings

May 18. M.....	Christ Our Great Prophet (Acts 3: 11-26)
May 19. T.....	A Prophet Like Moses (Deut. 18: 15-19)
May 20. W.....	Christ Fulfillment of Prophecy (Luke 4: 16-30)
May 21. T.....	Warning to Those Who Disregard (Heb. 2: 1-4)
May 22. F.....	Jesus Bore A Message from God (John 12: 44-50)
May 23. S.....	Message Revealed Through Holy Spirit (John 16: 1-15)
May 24. S.....	Apostles Wrote by Inspiration (Eph. 3: 1-13)

TIME.—Probably A.D. 63 or 64.

Place.—Rome

PERSONS.—Probably Paul and some Hebrew Christians.

Introduction

It is quite obvious that primary purpose for which the Epistles to the Hebrews was written was to persuade some Jewish Christians to continue their course in Christ to the end of the way. Even a cursory reading of the letter will enable one

to see that many of the intended readers to say the least, were in grave danger of falling back into Judaism. These people had been trained under the laws and institutions of Moses; and their minds had been thoroughly molded in the form

of teaching which the great law-giver had delivered unto them. Furthermore, all of their early impressions and religious habits had the effect of inclining them toward the imposing rites and ceremonies of the law. And to those educational predilections in favor of Judaism, there were added other forces which were influencing them away from Christ, such as discouragement and discontent which resulted from their many trials and persecutions. The following words from Robert Milligan will throw some light on the conditions which prevailed in Judea at the time this letter was written.

"The same spirit of envy and malice which had moved the unbelieving Jews to put to death the Lord of life and glory, still prompted and excited them to harass and annoy in every conceivable way his innocent and unoffending followers. The scribes and rulers exercised all their powers of logic, rhetoric, and sophistry, against the disciples of the despised Nazarene, as they were wont to call our Immanuel; and when the force of argument was unavailing, they had recourse to persecution. Some of them they killed; some, they put in prison; and others, they despoiled of their goods:—and all this they did with the view of putting a stop to the progress of Christianity, and inducing ail to follow Moses as their leader." All of these things, of course, made the lot of these Hebrew Christians very discouraging. Their hands were already hanging down and their knees were trembling, which indeed, indicated that their faith was greatly wavering. (See Heb. 12: 12, 13.) They needed help, and it pleased God to send it to them in the form of this great and inspiring letter.

No one knows for certain who wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews; and

with some, the words of Origen regarding this letter, "But who wrote the epistle God only knows," seems to be conclusive. These words, however, according to Hastings' Dictionary of the Apostolic Church, Vol. I 539, "were originally spoken with reference to the amanuensis or translator of the epistle. Most modern scholars are content to extend their reference to the actual author." If what has just been said is correct, then it is not fair to make the words of Origen just quoted to mean that God only knows who the *author* of the epistle was. We may not, indeed, learn much about the identity of the author, but we can deal fairly with the quotation from Origen.

It may be that the majority of Bible students are of the opinion that there are many who feel that he did. Conybeare and Howson note that regardless of who may have written the epistle, it represents the view, and was impregnated by the influence, of Paul. And in addition to meeting the immediate needs of the Hebrews of that day, these same authors further point out that "the Spirit of God has chosen this occasion to enlighten the universal church concerning the design of the ancient covenant, and the interpretation of the Jewish Scriptures. Nor could the memory of St. Paul be enshrined in a nobler monument, nor his mission on earth more fitly closed, than by this inspired record of the true subordination of Judaism to Christianity." It appears that the Letter to the Hebrews was written soon after Paul's release from his first Roman imprisonment. (Cf. Heb. 13: 23.) The words of the passage just cited are not the words of a man who was still in a Roman prison, with all of its uncertainties.

### The Golden Text

*"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him"* In as much as the Epistle to the Hebrews gives many of the details, perhaps more than any other book of the New Testament, regarding the transition from the Mosaic dispensation to that of Christ, the words just quoted are very apropos, as we begin our study of this letter. Jesus had taken three of his disciples,

Peter, James, and John, up into a high mountain, and was transfigured before them. During the course of the events of that occasion, Moses and Elijah appeared on the scene, and they were talking with Jesus. Peter, as usual, responded to the situation; and, while he was yet speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and a voice out of the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, in



whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

The departed and glorified saints who appeared with Jesus were the representatives of the old order, namely, the law and the prophets, under which Israel had lived since Jehovah spoke from mount Sinai. Moses was the great law-giver and the type of the greater prophet who was to come (Deut. 18: 15-19; Acts 3: 22, 23), while Elijah, one of the most illustrious of the Old Testament prophets, had endeavored to turn the heart of rebellious Israel back to God and was the type of the forerunner of Jesus (Malachi 4: 5, 6; Matt. 17: 10-13). Moses died in the land of Moab, after Jehovah had showed him the land of promise; and was buried by God in the valley of that land. (Deut. 34: 1-6.) Elijah was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire, which was drawn by horses of fire,

without dying. (2 Kings 2: 11.) And now these two ancient worthies, with such unusual experiences, had come to talk with Jesus about his own death which was rapidly approaching.

The voice out of the cloud which the disciples heard was that of God, and the first two clauses of his message on that occasion were also spoken by him following the baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3: 17, and that part of the Divine utterance may be thought of as the voice of affection and approval; but the last clause is peculiar to the transfiguration, and is the voice of imperative duty. The message regarding his Son, along with the disappearance of the two heavenly visitors, signified that God, who in the past had spoken to the fathers by the prophets, would henceforth speak only through his Son. (Cf. 2 Pet. 1: 16-18.)

## The Text Explained

### God's Final Word to Man Was Spoken through His Son

(Heb. 1: 1-4)

*God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds; who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; having become by so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they.*

The opening verses of the Epistle to the Hebrews has been described as the most impressive passage of Greek in the entire New Testament. No other letter in the Sacred Collection begins like this one does. Without any preliminaries whatsoever, the writer begins by saying that God had previously spoken. The letter ranks with Genesis and John, in that it begins with the majestic name of God, who is, of course, the source of all authority and the originator of the universe itself. In an earlier letter, Paul had said, "But all things are of God." (2 Cor. 5: 18; cf. 1 Cor. 11: 12.) And, too, the fact that he had pre-

viously spoken through the prophets, but is now speaking through his Son, is ample evidence of the progressive nature of his revelation to the human race. Bible students are aware of the truth that it required some sixteen hundred years for God to reveal his plan for redeeming the sinful race of man. This, of course, included the approximately four hundred years of prophetic silence between Malachi and the beginning of John's ministry. The reason for the long period of revelation was not God's inability to reveal his will in a shorter time, but man's inability to receive the full revelation without delay.

The variety of the revelation during the Jewish dispensation, indicated by "divers portions and in divers manners," included both the substance of the message and the manner of its deliverance. That which was spoken by the prophets to the fathers usually concerned the ones to whom it was spoken, as well as to the future generations, especially those of the New Testament period. And, too, various methods of revealing God's will in that age were employed: for example, types, shadows, and plain speech. The whole process has been compared to a great drama which was divided into separate acts; and in each act Jehovah used different methods of bringing

home to his people the various aspects of the truth which he wanted them to know.

The "end of these days" probably refers to the end of the Jewish age, since the personal ministry of Christ took place during the last days of the Mosaic dispensation; but the speaking "unto us in his Son" has reference to the present dispensation Christ, of course, does not continue to speak through the entire Christian age, as some allege; but instead his message was given through the inspired apostles and other writers of the New Testament, and was completed near the close of the first century of the Christian era. It was therefore at the end of the Mosaic dispensation, as well as at the beginning of the Christian dispensation, that God's final message to the human race was delivered.

Thus, at the very beginning of the epistle, the inspired writer sets forth the bold contrast between the preparatory revelation under the previous dispensation, and the finality of the absolute revelation in Christ. His purpose was to prove that the old covenant through which Jehovah dealt with the Hebrew race had been superseded by the new order under Christ. The place which the Epistle to the Hebrews occupies in the literature of the Bible is comparable to the place which the transfiguration of Christ occupies in his life. Former mediator retired, that is, Moses and Elijah; and Christ was left alone under the voice of him who said, "Hear ye him."

Just when Jesus was appointed heir of all things has been, and still is, a matter of controversy among Bible students. Paul's statement in Eph. 3: 11—"according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord"—indicates the origin of the appointment, that is, the appointment was based on God's eternal purpose in Christ. Heirship is closely identified with sonship. (Cf. Rom. 8: 17 Gal. 4: 7). Christ claimed to be the Son of God while here upon the earth, but it was not until after his resurrection from the dead that the crowning proof of that fact became an absolute reality. (See Rom. 1: 3, 4.) It appears probable therefore that Jesus did not actually become heir of all things until after his resurrection from the dead, which

was the crowning event in his incarnation. The following quotation from Vincent seems appropriate just here.

"Christ *attained* the messianic lordship through incarnation. Something was *acquired* as the result of his incarnation which he did not possess before it, and could not have possessed without it. Equality with God was his birthright; but out of his human life, death, and resurrection came a type of sovereignty which could pertain to him only through his triumph over human sin in the flesh (verse 3), through his identification with men as their brother. Messianic lordship could not pertain to his preincarnate state: it is a matter of function, not of inherent power and majesty. He was *essentially* Son of God; he must *become* Son of man." It was through his incarnation that he became the latter. (See John 1: 3; Col. 1: 16, 17 in connection with the statement that God made the worlds through him.)

In saying that Christ is the effulgence of God's glory, and the very image of his substance, the writer gives expression to his absolute being in two aspects. *Effulgence*, according to Greek scholars, seems to carry with it the idea of divine radiance, or reflected brightness. Jesus is that radiance or reflected brightness, and no one can see the Father except through him (John 14: 9). The word "glory" refers to the divine attributes collectively, or, which is the same thing, the fulness of the Godhead—the full measure of Deity (Col. 2: 9). Jesus is the sole expression of this divine glory. The second characteristic of Christ which is mentioned here—"the very image of his substance"—means practically the same as the first. The grammatical construction is a kind of Hebrew parallelism, and the idea seems to be that the Son bears the exact impression of the divine nature and character of God.

Jesus is also represented as sustaining and directing the universe, of making possible the forgiveness of sins, something the law of Moses could not do (Acts 13: 39), and as taking his seat at the right hand of God in heaven. The Jews considered the angels as being next to God; and since Jesus was exalted above them, he is the most honored being in the universe, next to God.

## Christ Is Superior to Angels

(Heb. 1: 5-8)

*For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? and again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And when he again bringeth in the firstborn into the world he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire: but of the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; and the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.*

The whole purpose of this section of the text is to show that Christ is exalted above the angels of God; and the writer quotes scripture after scriptures of the Old Testament to prove his point. The Jewish Christians to whom the epistle was addressed had, doubtless, read those passages many times; but they had never associated them with Christ, in the manner here presented. When once people see the Lord in his true relationship, it will be much easier for them to realize the importance of being loyal to him. Verse 8 is one of the several instances in the Bible in which Jesus is referred to as God. (See Isa. 9: 6; Psalm 24: 8; Tit. 2: 13.) Jesus made it plain that it is just as necessary to heed his word, as it is to obey God. (Luke 10: 16; John 12: 48-50.)

## Neglect of the Lord's Word Can Be Fatal

(Heb. 2: 1-4)

*Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them. For if the word spoken through angels proved stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by whom that heard; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will.*

After stating that God now speaks to people through his Son, the writer of Hebrews used the remainder of

chapter 1 to point out the exalted station of Christ. As suggested earlier in this lesson, the probable reason for comparing the Son with angels was due to the fact that the Jews understood that the angels stood next to God in greatness and power. If the Son therefore is greater than the angels, then there is every reason to listen to that which he says; and that is the force of "therefore" with which chapter 2 begins.

The idea in "drifting" is in sharp contrast with *earnest heed*. A lapse in Christianity is more often the result of inattention, than of design. The figure used in the passage now before us seems to be that of people who have heard the Lord's message as being in a boat on a stream of water. It is natural for a boat to drift down stream to destruction, if there is danger in the way. It does not require any effort for one to be lost. He can fold his arms and give way to the natural current; and it will not be long until he will be beyond the hope of redemption. But on the other hand, if he wants to be saved, he must make diligent use of the means which have been provided for his salvation, the means contained in "the things that were heard."

The "word spoken through angels" was the law of Moses. (Cf. Deut. 33: 2; Acts 7: 53; Gal. 3: 19.) Moses was the mediator between God and the children of Israel, but angels were employed in giving the law to him; and if the law which was given through the agency of angels proved to be stedfast in every respect, what must be expected of the superior law which was spoken through God's Son?

The word "stedfast" means inviolable, being securely founded in the divine holiness, and eternal in its principles and obligations. Not a single departure from the law which was spoken through angels was passed by unnoticed; penalties were visited upon all who in any way violated it. "Transgression" was a stepping over, that is, a positive violation of the divine law; while "disobedience" was a refusal to hear and an unwillingness to obey; it was "*dis*"—obedience, a negative violation. Thus, in the two words we have the idea of sins of commission and sins of omission, or the two categories which

cover all sins. Every sin against the law of Moses received its just recompense of reward, or, which is the same thing, was properly dealt with.

The pronoun "we" in verse 3 is emphatic. If those who in any manner violated the law which was spoken through angels were appropriately punished, how shall *we* who have the words of the Son of God himself escape, if we disregard them? The idea contained in the term "neglect" is forcefully illustrated in Matt. 22: 5, where the same original word is rendered "made light of it," that is, they paid no attention to it. (Read Matt. 22: 1-6.) The salvation about which the writer is speaking is great because it is the salvation which is offered through Christ. Verses 3 and 4 in the passage we are now considering make it possible for us to identify the salvation in question. (1) It was first spoken through the Lord; (2) it was confirmed by them who heard him speak; and (3) it was attested by God through miraculous gifts. No one can be sure of this salvation, until he finds all three of

these marks of identification; but if he will read Mark 16: 14-20, he will soon see that they are all found in that passage.

The original preachers of the word were not left to their unaided memory, knowledge, and power in making known the will of God. The Holy Spirit was sent to direct and guide them, and to enable them to make known the terms of salvation with infallible certainty. God himself bore witness to their preaching by miraculous powers. "Signs" were miracles or other facts which proved their divine mission; "wonders" were miracles which were calculated to arrest attention; manifold, that is, various kinds of powers, were miracles which demonstrated the presence of superhuman power; while gifts of the Holy Spirit were the miraculous powers which were distributed (see marginal reading) to various ones for the purpose of confirming the word. The same general idea is found in 1 Cor. 12: 4-11. All of this was necessary during the age of miracles. (Cf. Eph. 4: 8-16.)

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What was the primary purpose the writer had in penning his epistle to the Hebrews?  
Why did those early Christians need such encouragement as the writer sought to give them?  
Who was the probable writer of the Hebrew letter?  
Why is it thought that the epistle was written after Paul's release from prison?

### The Golden Text

Discuss the relation of the golden text to the epistle we are now considering.  
What was the apparent purpose of the appearance of Moses and Elijah with Christ?  
What was their relationship to the previous dispensation?  
What was the significance of the voice of God at the transfiguration?

### God's Final Word to Man Was Spoken through His Son

Discuss the manner in which the Epistle to the Hebrews opens.  
What does the fact that God had previously spoken suggest regarding his revelation?  
Why did it require such a long period to reveal God's will to man?  
What is signified by "divers portions and in divers manners"?  
What is meant by the "end of these days"?  
In what way does God speak today through his Son?

Why did the writer contrast the preparatory revelation with the absolute and final one?

What places does the Epistle to the Hebrews occupy in the literature of the Bible?

When did Jesus apparently become heir of all things?

What is meant by the Son's being the effulgence of God's glory, and very image of his substance?

How does Christ uphold all things?

When did he take his seat on the right hand of God?

### Christ Is Superior to Angels

Why did the writer of Hebrews compare Christ with the angels?

In what way did he prove his point in this respect?

What effect should this have had on his readers?

What is the significance of referring to Christ as God?

What impression should this make on us?

### Neglect of the Lord's Word Can Be Fatal

After stating that God now speaks through his Son, what did the writer of Hebrews next do?

What is the force of "therefore" with which chapter 2 begins?

What is the idea contained in the writer's use of the term "drift"?

What was the "word spoken through angels" and how was it regarded by the Lord?

What is the significance of the term "we" as used in verse 3?

What is implied in the word "neglect"?

What is the "great salvation"?

How can we identify it?

Lesson IX—May 31, 1964

CHRIST S PRIESTHOOD

Lesson Text

Heb. 4: 14-16; 7: 26-28; 9: 24-28.

14 Having then a great high priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Je'-sus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

15 For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin.

16 Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help *us* in time of need.

26 For such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heaven;

27 Who needeth not daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the *sins* of the people: for this he did once or all, when he offered up himself.

28 For the law appointeth men high priests, having infirmity; but the

word of the oath, which was after the law, *appointeth* a Son, perfected for evermore.

24 For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us:

25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place year by year with blood not his own;

26 Else must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

27 And inasmuch as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this *cometh* judgment;

28 So Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation.

Golden Text.—*"Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law"* (Heb. 8: 4.)

Devotional Reading.—Psalms 110.

Daily Bible Readings

May 25. M.....	A Priest of the Most High God (Gen 14: 1-18)
May 26. T.....	Duties of Old Testament Priests (Lev. 1: 1-17)
May 27. W.....	Christ, A Priest After Order of Melchizedek (Psalms 110)
May 28. T.....	Christ On Throne of David (Isa. 9: 1-7)
May 29. F.....	Change in the Priesthood (Heb. 7: 11-25)
May 30. S.....	Jesus Not a Priest on Earth (Heb. 8: 1-13)
May 31. S.....	We Need No Other Offering for Sin (Heb. 10: 1-18)

Time.—A.D. 63 or 64.

Place.—Rome

Persons.—Probably Paul and some Hebrew Christians.

Introduction

There have been three major functions in the economy of God, in his dealings with man, in all ages of the world, namely, that of prophet, priest, and ruler. The prophet was God's spokesman to the people; the priests, as it were, stood between the people and God, and offered man's sacrifice to Jehovah; while the ruler was the governor who sought to reg-

ulate the conduct of those who were under his jurisdiction. During the first age of the world, all of these functions were often performed by a single individual, such as Noah, Abraham, and others. But when we come to the Jewish dispensation there was a marked difference in all of them, in that these functions were invested in three different persons.

This was the general rule, although they were sometimes united in a single person, as, for example, Samuel, who was prophet, priest, and judge.

But in the Christian dispensation all three of these major functions are combined in a single individual, that of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are, of course, speaking of those who had the chief responsibility in the three areas we are now considering, such as the king or chief ruler, the high priest, etc. For the most part, there were more than one prophet, and, as a rule, they were not subjected to a central human authority. Prophets were commissioned of God to speak his will to the people, whether with reference to present truth, or to that which pertained to the future. In the case of the ruler, there were always those who exercised subordinate authority under his over-all direction. A high priest had his place in all three of the dispensations, as well as those who are usually referred to as common priests, who were under the high priest.

Various and sundry duties pertained to the priesthood, as all Bible students know. For example, they were the organizers of religion, and took the lead in implementing its precepts. The place and work of the priesthood are probably better known and understood as they existed during the age of Moses, than at any other time in the history of God's dealings with man. They were charged with the responsibility of offering sacrifices at the altar, and performing all the other duties of the tabernacle and the temple. They were also the teachers of the people, especially with reference to their daily lives and worship, and to act in all respects as God's ministers of mercy and benevolence. All of this required that they live above reproach, and keep themselves in a state of sanctification, if they were to please God and be effective in the discharge of their various responsibilities. In a word, they were set apart for a particular work, and should at all times be prepared to approach God, both for themselves and others.

### The Golden Text

*"Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law."* The writer of Hebrews makes it plain in Heb. 7: 12 that the priesthood is the basis of religious law, that is, law which is designed to govern man in his relation to God. "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law." Two considerations will show the reason for this, namely, (1) Religion is intended to bring into and to keep man in fellowship with God, which, of course requires that man be obedient to God in all things contained in his law for him. (2) But since perfect obedience is not possible on the part of fallible human beings, a sacrificial system for sins was essential; and this required a priest to make the offering.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is, to a very large extent, occupied with the priesthood of Christ; and the reason for its existence is based upon the fact that the priesthood of the former dispensation, both with reference to the priest himself and the gift which he had to offer, was not sufficient for the needs of the race

which was steeped in sin. "For the law having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things, can never with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect them that draw nigh. Else would they not have ceased to be offered? because the worshippers, having been once cleansed, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance made of sins year by year. For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins." (Heb. 10: 1-4.)

The transition from Judaism to Christianity was very difficult for the Hebrew people to make. They had failed to understand the real mission of the Messiah, and that failure stood squarely in the way of their accepting Jesus as the Messiah; and this, in turn, made it difficult for them to take hold of the idea that Jesus could be a priest. But when once they realized the nature of the priesthood of Christ, it was relatively easy for them to see that a new and better law was necessary. Furthermore, when they came to understand

that Christ would become a high priest, they could then see that his priesthood would be of a higher order than that of Aaron. The writer of Hebrews cited the scriptures which the Jews themselves regarded as

messianic in order to prove the truthfulness of the statement concerning the higher order of the priesthood of Christ. (Cf. Psalm 110: 4.) This is the priesthood which we are to consider today.

## The Text Explained

### A Transitional and Introductory Statement Regarding the Priesthood of Christ

(Heb. 4: 14-16)

*Having then a great high priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and, may find grace to help us in time of need.*

Although the high priesthood of Jesus has been mentioned in the epistle now under consideration before (Heb. 2: 17; 3: 1), there has been no formal discussion of it up to the point at which our lesson text for today begins. The Son of God has been showed to be greater than the angels and Moses, and now the transition is to be made from that which has already been said to a rather full discussion of the priesthood of "Jesus the Son of God," where Jesus is identified fully and formally as God's Son. In saying that this high priest "hath passed through the heavens," he means that he passed through all lesser realms, into the presence of God himself. This is apparently a reference to the high priest of the previous dispensation, passing through the Holy place of the tabernacle into the Most Holy. "Now in the things which we are saying the chief point is this: We have such a high priest, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man." (Heb. 8: 1, 2.)

In saying, "Let us hold fast our confession," the writer of Hebrews is, in effect, saying, "Let us hold fast our religion." He had already said that Jesus is the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. "Wherefore,

holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus." (Heb. 3: 1.) The literal meaning of the term "confess" is to say the same thing. Thus, when God, said, "This is my beloved Son," he stated a truth; and when we confess Christ we are saying the same thing. When Jehovah gave the law to his people through Moses, they acknowledge his words, and agreed to abide by them, that is, to obey them; and just so, when we confess Christ, we agree to obey that which he commands. (Cf. Matt. 28: 1-20; Acts 2: 42.)

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he mentioned "the obedience of your confession unto the gospel of Christ," and that means that they were obedient to its requirements. (See 2 Cor. 9: 13; cf. Heb. 10: 23.) When people yield themselves to Christ by becoming obedient to his gospel, they literally pledge themselves to obey his will; and they can hold fast the confession which they made before being baptized into Christ, only by doing that which they agreed to do. "Faithful is the saying: For if we died with him, we shall also live with him: if we endure, we shall also reign with him: if we shall deny him, he also will deny us: if we are faithless, he abideth faithful; for he cannot deny himself." (2 Tim. 2: 11-13.) To deny Christ by being unfaithful to him is the exact opposite of confessing him, that is, of agreeing to be faithful to him. (Cf. Matt. 10: 32, 33.)

As a further encouragement to faithfulness to Christ, Paul assures his readers that our high priest, although in heaven, is not out of touch with the feeling of our infirmities. This is true because he experienced, while here on earth, every possible temptation which can come to us, yet without once yielding to sin. This, of course, makes Christ the perfect high priest. "Though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things

which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation." (Heb. 5: 8, 9; read also verses 1 through 10.) And so, because of the sympathetic nature of Christ and his attitude toward us, we can always feel free to approach the throne of grace, whenever we need help in any kind of situation.

That which has just been said is not simply a theory to be believed, but an assurance to be put into practice. "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." (1 Cor. 10: 13; Heb. 13: 5, 6; James 1: 2-8.) "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (Rom. 8: 31-34.) The marginal reading has an interrogative in answer to the question, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" "Shall God that justifieth?" And also in answer to the question, "Who is he that condemneth?" "Shall Christ Jesus that died, . . . ?" Instead of condemning us, Christ is at God's right hand, making intercession for us!

### A Triumphant Summary

(Heb. 7: 26-28)

For such a *high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people: for this he did once for all, when he offered up himself. For the law appointeth men high priests, having infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was after the law, appointeth a Son, perfected for evermore.*

In giving a summary at this point, the writer of Hebrews does not mean

that he has finished his discussion of the priesthood of Christ; that will not be done until he reaches verse 18 of chapter 10. He is simply giving a summary of that which he has said thus far. His aim is to show the superiority of the priesthood of Christ to that of the Levitical by his spotless character and the perfection of the offering which he made. This, says, Paul, is precisely the kind of high priest we need. He describes him as being (1) *holy*, in the same sense that God is holy; (2) *guileless*, without malice or any desire to deceive the unsuspecting; (3) *undefiled*, without spot, pure, and is therefore never disqualified, as the Levitical priests sometimes were, for the performance of his priestly duties; (4) *separated from sinners*, not only because he was himself without sin, but also because he was exalted beyond the reach of sin or sinners; and (5) *made higher than the heavens*, in a spare of celestial purity and glory, which qualifies him "to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. 7: 25.)

In the previous dispensation the priest stood between the sinner and God, and offered sacrifices for the former's sin. In a similar way, Jesus as God's Son stands between our sinful souls and the righteous God; but instead of offering the blood of animals, he offered himself unto God, without spot without blemish. All of this made the daily sacrifices of the Levitical priesthood wholly unnecessary; because (1) he has no sins of his own to atone for, and (2) the sacrifice which he offered is sufficient for the cleansing of all sins. "My little children, these things I write unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." (1 John 2: 1, 2.)

The law of Moses authorized the appointment of men to the Levitical priesthood, and they all, without exception, were men "having infirmity," which means, being frail, they often fell into sin. One has only to read the Old Testament history of Israel in order to see how true this was. Some of the priests who stood at the



altar were both vile and vicious, while others made an honest effort to do right; but at best even they frequently did that which was wrong. All of this, of course, made it necessary for them to offer sacrifices for their own sins, and well as for the sins of the people. But not so with Christ: he was appointed to the priesthood, not by the law of Moses, but by the word of God's oath, "which was after the law," that is, the oath was given and recorded after the law was spoken. (See Psalm 110: 4; cf. Gal. 3: 17.) The oath, coming as it did after the law, clearly shows that the law respecting the priesthood was not sufficient for all time, and therefore needed to be replaced; and that is exactly what happened. And so, instead of appointing men to the priesthood during the new dispensation who were in need of sacrificial offerings for themselves, the word of the oath designated God's Son, who is perfected for evermore, to be our high priest. (Read Heb. 7: 11-25.)

### The Sacrifice of Christ Therefore Does Not Need to Be Repeated

(Heb. 9: 24-28)

*For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place year by year with blood not his own; else must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And inasmuch as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment; so Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation.*

Paul, in this section of the lesson text, is continuing the contrast between the high priestly ministry of the old covenant and that of Christ, in which he shows that Christ did not enter into the material tabernacle or temple, which was only a counterpart of the true; but into heaven itself. (Those who read chapter 8 of the letter we are now studying

will see that the writer says that the real pattern is in heaven.) The high priest of the old order was not permitted to see God's face, but Christ is continuously in his presence, where he makes intercession for us. Under the law of Moses, the high priest entered the most holy place each year on the day of atonement, and he always took with him blood which was not his own. The reason for and the result of the annual service is clearly stated in Heb. 10: 1 ff; but inasmuch as the blood of Christ did and does take away sins, that was and is the only sacrifice needed. (Cf. 1 John 1: 6, 7; Rev. 1: 5b.)

If Christ's one offering of himself was not eternally efficacious, that is, if it was necessary for him to make periodical offerings and sacrifices, then, says the writer, he must have suffered often since creation. It appears that this statement was made in view of the affirmation that the blood of Christ had been offered for sins under the old covenant. (See Heb. 9: 15; cf. Rom. 3: 24-26.) Sin has been in the world since Adam, and it had to be atoned for; and there is no other way for that to be done, except through the blood of Christ. The "end of the ages" is literally the "consummation of the ages" (see marginal note), or the winding up of all the previous ages, before the dispensation of Christ began. The singular "sin" is significant: Christ dealt with the principle of sin; while the sacrifices of the old covenant dealt with individual transgressions.

The statement, "And inasmuch as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment," seems to be an illustration of the truth just stated. The common lot of men is to die only once; they are not permitted to return to the earth to compensate for neglect or failure, but instead they enter upon the results which follow their life. The term "judgment" appears to be used in the sense of one's reaping that which he sows, especially in the day of judgment. This is the inexorable law of the harvest, as set forth by Paul in his letter to the Galatians: "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." (Gal. 6: 7, 8.)

The writer of Hebrews then makes this application: "So Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation." That is Christ, just as other men do, died but once, and the results will be apparent at his second coming. He will come at that time, not as a sacrifice for sin, but as a Savior. Those who "wait" for him are those who have done and are doing his will. (Cf. 2 Tim. 4: 6-8.) The Bible nowhere teaches that man will have a second chance, once he has turned down the sacrifice which Christ has already made for his sins. "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 dieth 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? For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. 10: 26-31; cf. Luke 16: 19-31.)

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

What major functions have always been present in God's dealing with the human race?

What was the principle duty of each one?

What differences are noted in their ministrations during the different dispensations?

Discuss in particular the duties of the priests.

Why were they required to keep themselves holy in God's sight?

### The Golden Text

In what way was the priesthood of the Jewish covenant related to the law of Moses?

Why was this true?

What is one of the major subjects discussed in the Book of Hebrews?

Why was the priesthood of the Old Testament period insufficient for man's ultimate needs?

Why was it difficult for the Hebrew people to make the change from one system to the other?

How did the writer of Hebrews go about proving his point regarding the priesthood?

### A Transitional and Introductory Statement Regarding the Priesthood of Christ

How did Paul begin his principle discussion of the priesthood of Christ?

What did he mean by saying that he had passed through the heavens?

Compare this with the action of the high priest under Moses.

What does it mean for one to hold fast his confession?

What is the literal meaning of the term "confess"?

What is involved in our confession of Christ?

Under what circumstances do we make our confession of Christ?

In what way may people be unfaithful to their confession?

What further encouragement does the writer give for faithfulness to Christ?

In what way did Jesus become the perfect high priest?

What is the confidence which we can place in all of this?

In what way does God aid his people with reference to temptation?

What is Jesus constantly doing for us?

### A Triumphant Summary

What summary did Paul give at this point and why?

What was his purpose in discussing the priesthood of Christ?

What are some of the things which he showed regarding Christ as a priest?

Discuss the meaning of each of the five characteristics he mentioned.

What is the principle difference between Christ and the Levitical priests?

What kind of men did the law of Moses authorize for appointment to the priesthood?

What need, then, did they always have?

In what way was Christ appointed to his office?

In what sense did the oath come after the law?

What did this fact show regarding the weakness of the Levitical system?

### The Sacrifice of Christ Therefore Does Not Need to Be Repeated

What was Paul purpose in this section of the lesson text?

What great advantage does Christ as our high priest have over the high priest under the old covenant?

Why is it not necessary to repeat the offering for sin which Christ made?

How does the writer of Hebrews illustrate this point?

What will be the purpose of the Lord's next appearance?

What does the Bible teach regarding a second chance for those who reject Christ's offering?

## Lesson X—June 7, 1964

## GOING ON UNTO PERFECTION

## Lesson Text

## Heb. 6: 1-10

1 Wherefore leaving the doctrine of the first principles of Christ, let us press on unto perfection; not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

2 Of the teaching of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

3 And this will we do, if God permit.

4 For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit,

5 And tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come,

6 And *then* fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto re-

pentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

7 For the land which hath drunk the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them for whose sake it is also tilled, receiveth blessing from God:

8 But if it beareth thorns and thistles, it is rejected and nigh unto a curse; whose end is to be burned.

9 But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak:

10 For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the love which ye showed toward his name, in that ye ministered unto the saints, and still do minister.

Golden Text.—“*But solid food is for fullgrown men.*” (Heb. 5: 14.)  
Devotional Reading.—2 Pet. 1: 6-11.

## Daily Bible Readings

June 1. M.....	Growth in Grace (2 Pet. 3: 14-18)
June 2. T.....	Development from Infancy (1 Pet. 2: 1-5)
June 3. W.....	Strong Meat for the Mature (Heb. 5: 11-14)
June 4. T.....	Adding the Christian Graces (2 Pet. 1: 6-11)
June 5. F.....	A Full Stature in Christ (Eph. 4: 1-16)
June 6. S.....	Stretching Forward (Phil. 3: 13-16)
June 7. S.....	Triumph Through Christ (Phil. 4: 10-20)

Time.—A.D. 63 or 64.

Place.—Rome

Persons.—Probably Paul and some Hebrew Christians.

## Introduction

The term “perfection,” as used in the text now before us, has reference to *full growth* (marginal note) or maturity, in contrast to the elementary condition which is described in the preceding paragraph. “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.)

Thus, the people to whom the Hebrew letter was addressed had been going backward, instead of forward: they had deteriorated to the point where they had “need of milk, and not of solid food.” That was an unfortunate condition, but it was by no means limited to the people of that day. The same situation is often seen today; for no one can stand still in the Christian life. He will either go forward as God intends that he

should; or he will find himself drifting with the current. (Cf. Heb. 2: Iff.) The writer of Hebrews is never far away from practical daily living. Those who profess to follow Christ must either give close attention to that which he says, or they will find themselves getting closer and closer to the point of no return. We must either go on to perfection, that is, to maturity; or we will revert to our infantile state.

Peter tells us exactly how the process works. He first presents God's side: "Seeking 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.) He then presents the human side: "Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue; and in your virtue knowledge; and in your knowledge self-control; and in your self-control patience; and in your patience godliness; and in godliness brotherly kindness; and in your brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he that lacketh these things is blind seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins. Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things ye shall never stumble: for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Pet. 1: 5-11.)

### The Golden Text

*"But solid food is for fullgrown men."* No one accidentally grows into the type of character which is pleasing to the Lord. There are certain things which one must do, if he goes on to perfection. He must be willing to eat the spiritual food which has been provided for him; and when that is done, the result will not be disappointing. Or, to drop the figure, the Lord's people must study the Bible, learn its teaching, and put its requirements into practice. Any one who is familiar with the New Testament knows that Christianity is a purposeful life. Christianity may, in fact, be described as the reproduction of the life of Christ in the human heart. This, of course, requires an active life, for "faith apart from works is dead," and "as he thinketh within himself, so is he." Not only will there be an active life; there will also be a definite aim. (Cf. John 17: 4; 4: 34.) God expects his children to live a positive, determined, and purposeful life in this world. An old adage tells us that a man without a purpose is like a ship without a rudder and without a sail. This lesson applies with equal force to individual Christians and congregations of the Lord's people.

"Fullgrown men" are those who have Reached maturity; and they

stand in contrast with those who are described as being babes. Such people have advanced to the point where they not only are able to receive solid food, but their condition actually requires it. This is comparable to the figure which Paul used in reverse with reference to the Galatian Christians, when he told them that the law of Moses was, in reality, only for "schoolboys," that is, a kind of guardian or tutor to lead those who were fully developed to Christ. The literal meaning of the Greek word for "tutor" is *boy-leader*. Those followers of Christ who have learned the fundamental principles of the gospel are in a position to study the great issues which are set forth in the word of the Lord; and they are prepared to approach such investigations with humility and a teachable attitude. (Cf. John 7: 17; Matt. 13: 12.)

During the process of growth, those who are following the divine order are using their senses, that is, their faculties for perceiving and understanding the truth; and as a result of this, they are able "to discern good and evil." The conditions which are described in the context of the passage we are now considering fully explain why some people are unable to see anything wrong with many

erroneous doctrines and practices. This is because they are "without experience in the word of righteousness." Children do not know the difference between right and wrong, and they must be told again and again, until a conscience regarding such matters awakens within them. This conscience is sharpened by practice, and eventually, if the teaching and learning process continues, they

will themselves be able to settle such questions on the basis of understanding, that is, of their own understanding. Christian perfection can be reached only by definite and strenuous endeavor. Faith and purpose are furnished to animate our efforts; but we will never be allowed to substitute them for performance. It is impossible to make a man good who is unwilling to endeavor to be good.

## The Text Explained

### Progress Is Going Beyond First Principles (Heb. 6: 1-3)

*Wherefore leaving the doctrine of the first principles of Christ, let us press on unto perfection; not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the teaching of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit.*

The watchword of the Christian is and should be progress, and no faithful child of God will relax in his efforts to please God. Some one has pointed out that Christianity created the passion for progress; and that nations have been progressive in proportion to their acceptance of Christ. The historical comparison shows that the more nearly a people approached the spirit of the primitive faith, the safer and more rapid has been its progress, in most of the higher areas of its meaning.

Those who are familiar with the writings of Paul are aware of the fact that he often presents the doctrine of Christianity in the form of an epitome. (Cf. Tit. 2: 11, 12.) Another example of this epitomical teaching is found in the section of the lesson text which we are now considering. The writer, as we have already seen, had just drawn a contrast between babes and fullgrown men; and now he is ready for a lesson on progress in the Christian life.

The idea in the injunction in verse 1 is, according to Thayer, to leave the the subject matter he mentions in the sense of not discussing it for the time being. Or, if we want the question put in another way, the writer is urging that progress is taking additional steps, and not simply remaining with the first things which

are learned. If one dwells on the fundamental principles of the system of truth which he has learned, he will certainly neglect other and equally important lessons which he should carefully consider. The principles which are mentioned in the passage now under consideration belong to the instruction regarding Christianity which was given at the very beginning. This is another way of saying that the doctrine referred to has always characterized the gospel of Christ. They are the foundation principles of Christianity which may be spoken of as a system of truth. Therefore, when those who are going on toward perfection leave these principles, they do so in the sense that one leave the alphabet of the language he speaks, or the four great principles — addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division — upon which the entire science of mathematics is based. Having laid the foundation, or learned the principles which underlie the system, one goes on to perfection in the Christian life by building thereon.

The foundation principles which are to be *left behind, as* listed in the text now before us, may be regarded as illustrative of the writer's proposal to proceed to the exposition of the doctrine of the priesthood of Christ. (Cf. Heb. 5: 11, and the verses immediately preceding.) Christian maturity, which certainly includes knowledge of many basic questions beyond the fundamental issues, can never be attained by a continuous return to the subjects which belong to the earliest state of Christian instruction.

The six subjects which are included in "the doctrine of the first principles of Christ" are divided into three pairs, namely, "of repentance from dead works, and of faith to-

ward God;" (2) "of the teaching of baptism, and of laying on of hands;" and (3) "of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment." It frequently happens that when people find repentance preceding faith, in a passage like this, that they miss the point which the inspired writer has in mind. (Cf. Acts 20: 21; Mark 1: 15.) The reference in this passage, and the two others cited, is not to their order in the gospel plan of salvation, as may be clearly seen by any one who will consider the facts in the case. Furthermore, this pair of fundamental principles cannot be separated in actual life, and no one can possibly get their order reversed in practical obedience. A man repents *because* a new belief has found its way into his mind. The "dead works" which are mentioned here are not merely sinful works, as that expression is ordinarily understood; but rather works without the element of life which comes through faith in the living God. There is therefore a sharp contrast between dead works and faith; and this truth was among the very first which would have to be taught to a Jew who was being urged to accept Christianity. (Cf. Tit. 3: 5.) The Jewish people had been taught to rely upon works for their salvation. (See Eph. 2: 8-10.)

The second pair in the doctrine of the first principles of Christ is made up of the teaching of baptisms, and of the laying on of hands. Whatever may be the exact meaning of "baptism" (plural), it is well to keep in mind the fact that there is only one literal baptism in the gospel plan of salvation. (Cf. Eph. 4: 5.) There are several metaphorical baptisms (Matt. 3: 11, 12; Mark 10: 38, 39), but only one literal baptism. There are some who think that the writer was contrasting the various washing of the Old Testament period and the baptism of John with the baptism which belongs to the reign of Christ; but since the writer of Hebrews says that the "teaching of baptisms" is a fundamental principle of the doctrine of Christ, it appears that he was speaking of the baptisms, both literal and metaphorical, which are related to Christ.

All of these questions would have to be understood before a Jew, or any one else for that matter, could intelligently obey the gospel. One

of the chief reasons for rejecting water baptism as a condition of salvation by people today, is their utter lack of an understanding of the difference between the literal and metaphorical baptisms which belong to the Christian dispensation. This is fundamental to an acceptance with God; and when people learn the truth regarding these baptisms, they no longer hesitate to accept the New Testament teaching regarding water baptism as a condition of salvation. (Cf. Acts 10: 47, 48.) The laying on of hands is frequently referred to in both the Old and New Testaments. But that practice passed away with the age of miracles. In the Old Testament we learn that when a man brought an animal to the priest to be offered as a sacrifice, it was necessary for him to lay his hand on the animal's head before it was slain. This indicated that the animal was being offered for the man who brought it. (See Lev. 1: 3, 4.)

The resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment make up the third pair in the doctrine of the first principles of Christ; and they have to do with the outlook under which believers in Christ must live. The resurrection from the dead involves more than simply the body; the question includes the whole inquiry regarding the future state, or whether or not a person will continue to live after this life is over. The resurrection was denied by the Sadducees (Acts 23: 8) and ridiculed by the heathen philosophers (Acts 17: 32), but it was a fundamental doctrine of Christ. The question of the eternal judgment will determine the final destiny of those who are raised from the dead; and this is enough to show that this is one of the most important questions which can engage the attention of man.

The New Testament clearly teaches that the Lord's people should always take God's will into consideration in all their purposes and plans. (Cf. James 4: 13-17; John 15: 5; Acts 18: 21; 1 Cor. 16: 7.) Milligan notes that we must have God's help in going on to perfection. "The apostle well knew that without God's help, they could accomplish nothing. (John 15: 5.) And hence while urging his brethren, by all the high motives of the gospel, to greater diligence in making their calling and election sure, he is care-

ful to remind them of the necessity of submitting to the will of God, and looking to him for help in all things."

### **The Danger and Awful Consequences of Apostasy** (Heb. 6: 4-8)

*For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the land which hath drunk the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them for whose sake it is also tilled, receiveth blessing from God: but if it beareth thorns and thistles, it is rejected and nigh unto a curse; whose end is to be burned.*

The description of the saved which is given in this section of the lesson text is parallel to that which is contained in the first two verses of the chapter, although the parallel is not carried out in detail. But in both cases the same end is in view; and if progress is continued as God has ordained, the same results will be enjoyed in each instance, namely, perfection or maturity. In commenting on the verses now under consideration, Albert Barnes notes that we have here "a regular gradation from the first elements of piety in the soul to its highest developments; and whether the apostle so designed it or not, the language describes the successive steps by which the true Christian advances to the highest stage of Christian experience. The mind is (a) enlightened; then (b) it tastes of the heavenly gift, or has some experience of it; then (c) it is made to partake of the influences of the Holy Spirit; then (d) there is experience of the excellence and loveliness of the word of God; and (e) finally there is a participation of the full powers of the new dispensation; of the extraordinary energy which God puts forth in the gospel to sanctify and save the soul."

But notwithstanding all these marvelous blessings which come to those who accept the gospel of Christ, the Christian can lose his inheritance.

This is one of the many passages in the New Testament which teach that it is possible for truly converted people to fall from the Lord's favor, to the extent that they will finally be eternally lost. (Cf. Heb. 4: 11; 2 Pet. 2: 20-22.) The inspired writer says that it is *impossible* to renew them again unto repentance. The original word for "impossible" is *adunatos*, and it is the identical term which is found in such passages as Rom. 8: 3; Heb. 6: 18; 10: 4; 11: 6, where the meaning is unmistakable. Vincent says that it is impossible to dilute this word into *difficult*, while Milligan observes that "when the cord of life and love that bind the true believer to Christ, has been once completely severed, the parties so separated can never again be reunited. The case of the apostate is as hopeless as that Satan himself." (Cf. Heb. 10: 26-31.) The fruitless branch is as certain to be destroyed, as that the Lord uttered the word. (See John 15: 1-6.)

### **A Word of Encouragement**

(Heb. 6: 9, 10)

*But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak: for God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the love which ye showed toward his name, in that ye ministered unto the saints, and still do minister.*

The seriousness of the situation made it imperative that the writer of Hebrews issue a grave warning regarding the danger of apostasy which confronted his brethren. They were in danger of drifting away from the things which they had been taught, and the warning regarding the impending destruction was in order before the encouragement, which would possibly lead them to do something about it. There was absolutely no time for delay; they were fast approaching the "rapids," and the fatal falls were only a short distance away.

In saying that God would not forget their past deeds of benevolence and the love which they had manifested toward him and his people, the idea is not that such would cause him to overlook their defection, but rather that they could be certain of his dependability, and should therefore have no fear that he would

desert them. But the writer wanted them to understand that they themselves would have to give attention to the things which accompany salvation. God has always done his part, and he will continue to do so; but

man must also do his part. The means of saving the lost, and of keeping the saved with the Lord, has been amply provided; but the individual must work out his own salvation. (Cf. Phil. 2: 12, 13.)

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What is the meaning of the term "perfection" as used in this lesson?  
Discuss the setting in which the writer used the word.  
What common mistake were the Hebrew Christians making?  
Why can't one stand still in the Christian life?  
How may we be sure that we are on the way toward perfection?

### The Golden Text

Why is solid food needful for the full-grown man?  
How does one go about getting this kind of food?  
What is the real meaning of Christianity?  
Why must the Lord's people always have a purpose before them?  
What will fullgrown Christians always be capable of doing?

### Progress Is Going Beyond First Principles

What is the watchword of the Christian life?  
Under what circumstances can the greatest progress be made?  
Discuss Paul's ability to present the doctrine of Christianity in just a few words.  
What did he mean by saying that they should leave the doctrine of the first principles of Christ?  
What are those "first principles"?  
Why was it necessary to leave them behind?  
In what way did the writer arrange these first principles?  
Discuss the divine order of repentance and faith.

Why is it impossible to get them in the wrong order?  
What were the "dead works" from which they were to repent?  
What is the "teaching of baptisms"?  
Why do so many people reject water baptism as a condition of salvation?  
What is the teaching regarding the laying on of hands?  
Why is the resurrection of the dead regarded as a first principle of Christian doctrine?  
What should always be the attitude of Christian people toward the Lord's will?

### The Danger and Awful Consequences of

#### Apostasy

In what way does Paul describe the Christian experience?  
Discuss the successive steps which his language suggests.  
What does the New Testament teach regarding the possibility of the Christian's being finally lost?  
How can we know the meaning and significance of the term "impossible"?  
Why is it impossible to renew the apostate unto repentance?  
In what way does the apostle illustrate the lesson he is here presenting?  
What is certain to happen to the unfruitful and unproductive?

### A Word of Encouragement

Why did Paul issue the grave warning about which we have been studying?  
Why not give the encouragement first?  
What lesson should we learn from this?  
What did the writer mean by saying that God would not forget that which they had done?  
What encouragement should this truth afford all of us?  
Why mention the "things that accompany salvation"?  
What does that mean?

## Lesson XI—June 14, 1964

## A BETTER COVENANT

### Lesson Text

Heb. 8: 1-13

1 Now in the things which we are saying the chief point *is this* We have such a high priest, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,

2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.

3 For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is necessary that

this *high priest* also have somewhat to offer.

4 Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law;

5 Who serve *that which is* a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, even as Mó'ses is warned *of God* when he is about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou



make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the mount.

6 But now hath he obtained a ministry the more excellent, by so much as he is also the mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises.

7 For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second.

8 For finding fault with them, he saith,

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord,

That I will make a new covenant with the house of Is'-ra-el and with the house of Ju'-dah;

9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers

In the day that I took them by the hand to lead them forth out of the land of E'-gypt;

For they continued not in my covenant,

**Golden Text.**—*"By so much also hath Jesus become the surety of a better covenant"*(Heb. 7: 22.)

**Devotional Reading.**—Jer. 31: 27-37.

### Daily Bible Headings

- |      |            |   |
|------|------------|---|
| June | 8. M.....  | Christ Better Than Moses (Heb. 3: 1-19)                   |
| June | 9. T.....  | Future Rest Better Than Sabbath (Heb. 4: 1-16)            |
| June | 10. W..... | Christ's Priesthood Superior to Aaron (Heb. 5: 1-14)      |
| June | 11. T..... | True Tabernacle Better Than Old (Heb. 8: 1-13)            |
| June | 12. F..... | Heaven the True Sanctuary (Heb. 9: 1-10)                  |
| June | 13. S..... | Offering of Christ Better Than Sacrifices (Heb. 9: 11-28) |
| June | 14. S..... | Sins Remembered No More (Heb. 10: 14-25)                  |

**Time.**—A.D. 63 or 64.

**Place.**—Rome

**Persons.**—Probably Paul and some Hebrew Christians.

### Introduction

The Bible contains all that we need to know concerning that which God has revealed to man (cf. Deut. 29: 29); but if we are to understand his plan for redeeming the human race, we must consider the scheme as it is gradually unfolded in the Scriptures. The unfolding of God's plan for saving the lost implies as progressing revelation; and, looking at the question of revelation from a broad point of view, it may be described as making known God, duty, and immortality. Its method is historical, and its purpose is redemptive and educational. God's great love for sinful man was back of all the efforts which were put forth for his redemption;

And I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Is'-ra-el

After those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, And on their heart also will I write them:

And I will be to them a God, And they shall be to me a people:

11 And they shall not teach every man his fellow-citizen,

And every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord:

For all shall know me, From the least to the greatest of them.

12 For I will be merciful to their iniquities,

And their sins will I remember no more.

13 In that he saith, A new *covenant*, he hath made the first old. But that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away.

but it required forty centuries of time and a succession of divine teachers, and martyrs, together with experiences of the natural realm, to educate man's selfish nature up to the point of grasping the sentiment of universal love. From local and national limitations, God continued to unfold his divine philanthropy, until the Holy Spirit finally announced through Peter that "God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him." (Acts 10: 34, 35.)

The primary purpose of the Bible is to reveal the Author's scheme of human redemption; and although the

history of this great book covers many centuries, and its contents deal with a wide variety of subjects, it is interesting to note that its principal theme is never lost sight of. (Cf. Luke 24: 27, 44.) The great plan of human redemption, as revealed in the Scriptures, is naturally divided into three parts, known to us as the Patriarchal, Jewish, and Christian Dispensations; and if we will carefully study these three epochal stages, we shall be able to mark the progress of divine revelation, as it moves on in the course of its ever-widening development. There is no record of a written law during the first age of Bible history, but covenants were made and written laws were given in the cases of the other two. One of the greatest needs of our day is the ability to distinguish between them, that is, between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ. Much of the confusion in the religious world today can be traced to a failure to deal with these two covenants in the manner in which God intended. The two covenants cover two entirely different areas in God's dealings with his people, and they do not overlap nor in any way adversely affect each other. This truth must be clearly perceived, if we are to understand the purpose of the two covenants.

The first covenant was made with the Israelites at mount Sinai, and was intended to meet all their needs of government, both civil and religious, and direction as long as it was in force. The Ten Commandments may be thought of as the Constitution of the theocracy, and all the other statutes and ordinances are based upon and are entirely in harmony with that Great Code. Many of the requirements of the first covenant pertained to the fleshly state of Israel, and that fact must be kept in mind, if we are to understand their meaning. Paul makes it abundantly clear in Gal. 3: 15-4: 7 that the Mosaic law was never intended to last for ever. It was a kind of "temporary measure" to continue until Christ should come. The law of Moses was intended for one and only one nation; while the gospel of Christ is for all men of every nation. But we should always keep in mind the fact that the two covenants cannot be completely isolated from each other, while the effort is made to grasp their meaning and purpose. Every one who would accurately understand the gospel of Christ must approach it through the old covenant; and he who would discover the full meaning of the Jewish order must make the writers of the new covenant his commentators.

## The Golden Text

*"By so much also hath Jesus become the surety of a better covenant."* We should keep in mind the fact that the writer of Hebrews says, "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7: 12); and with that statement in mind, we can understand why Jesus became the surety of a better covenant. Paul quotes Psalm 110: 4—"Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek"—and then adds, "For there is a disannulling of a foregoing commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness (for the law made nothing perfect), and a bringing in thereupon of a better hope, through which we draw nigh unto God. And inasmuch as it is not without the taking of an oath (for they indeed have been priests without an oath; but he with an oath by him that saith of him, The Lord sware and will not repent himself, Thou art a

priest for ever); by so much also hath Jesus become the surety of a better covenant. And they indeed have been made priests many in number, because that by death they are hindered from continuing; but he, because he abideth for ever, hath his priesthood unchangeable. Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. 7: 18-25.)

Paul's argument in the words of the golden text therefore is, that since Christ has become a high priest as the result of the oath of Jehovah, a new covenant has made been made, and that he is its sponsor, or the one who guarantees its fulfillment. The original word for "surety" occurs only here in the New Testament. The golden text is rendered by Williams in these words: "So much the

more Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant," while it is expressed this way in The New English Bible: "How far superior must the covenant also be of which Jesus is the guarantor!" One of the definitions given by Webster is "that which confirms or makes sure; a guarantee; ground of confidence or security." Thus, if a man with a small amount of capital accepts the responsibility of a heavy financial obligation, he would feel much more secure if a man of great wealth would offer to be his surety, or would guarantee to see him through with the enterprise.

Bible students have not been in the past, and they are not now agreed as to who the beneficiary is with reference to the Lord's security, whether he was surety for men to

God, for God to men, or whether he was surety for both parties. The Expositor's Greek Testament notes that more likely the writer "chose the word because his purpose was not to exhibit Jesus as negotiating the covenant, but especially as securing that it should achieve its end." And after calling attention to various viewpoints regarding those for whom Jesus might have been the surety, this same authority continues, "There is no reason to suppose that the writer particularised in any of these directions. He merely wished to express the thought that by the appointment of Jesus to the priesthood, the covenant based upon this priesthood was secured against all failure of any of the ends for which it was established.

## The Text Explained

### The Sphere of Christ's High Priestly Ministry

(Heb. 8: 1-5)

*Now in the things which we are saying the chief point is this: We have such a high priest, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is necessary that this high priest also have somewhat to offer. Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve that which is a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, even as Moses is warned of God when he is about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the mount.*

It was pointed out in an earlier lesson that the writer of Hebrews turned to a more thorough discussion of the high priesthood of Jesus in the closing part of chapter 4 and the beginning of chapter 5, after a passing reference to the subject in chapters 2 and 3. When the apostle reached what is now chapter 8, he was ready to state a definite conclusion, or to summarize that which he had said thus far; and that was this: "We have such a high priest," that is,

we have such a high priest as the one he had been describing, namely, the one which God had sworn to raise up after the order of Melchizedek. And furthermore, since he is at the right hand of God in the heavens, he has received the greatest honor which is possible for one to enjoy. (Cf. Eph. 1: 20, 21; Phil. 2: 5-11.)

After showing in earlier chapters of the epistle now under consideration that Christ is superior to the angels, Moses, and the Aaronic priesthood, Paul now comes to prove that the actual work which Christ came to do is far above and beyond that which was accomplished by the Levitical priests. Their ministry was in the sanctuary which men set up, and which was only a shadow of that which was to come; while the ministry of Christ is in the heavenly sanctuary and "the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man." The "sanctuary" in which Christ ministers on behalf of his people is heaven itself, the antitype of the most holy place of the tabernacle; that is where he makes his intercessions. (Cf. Rom. 8: 34.) Contrary to the views of many commentators who regard the *true tabernacle* as explanatory of the sanctuary, it appears quite evident that the "true tabernacle" is the church itself. Just as the high priest of the old covenant ministered in both the holy and the most holy places, so Christ ministers in both the church (cf. Eph. 1: 22, 23) and in heaven itself. Moses "pitched" the

tent of the old tabernacle, while Christ built the church of the new dispensation. (See Matt. 16: 18.)

Continuing the comparison of the two priesthoods, Paul goes on to show that Christ also engages in the principal functions of the high priest, namely, that of offering both gifts and sacrifices. But he also shows that it is necessary for Christ to be in heaven, so that he can function as a high priest; for if he were on earth, which is equivalent to saying that if the old order were still in force, he could not be a high priest.

The statement, "seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law," may seem to some to imply that the law was still in force; but we know from such passages as Col. 2: 14 that the law was no longer binding upon the Lord's people. (Cf. Rom. 6: 15; 7: 6.) It is possible that Paul was merely assuming, for the sake of his argument, that the law was still in force. At any rate, Paul's readers could see that if there is indeed a new high priest, of another order, which he had abundantly proved; then it was absolutely essential that he function in another sphere.

In calling attention to the warning which Moses received when he was about to make the tabernacle, Paul set the stage for a clear view of the true nature of the Levitical priesthood and the law of Moses; they were but a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. This is to say that they themselves depended upon the great archetype for their own existence. Something existed in heaven, of which the old tabernacle and all of its services were but a copy. The "pattern" referred to was evidently "the sanctuary, and the true tabernacle [that is, the church (cf. Heb. 9: 23)], which the Lord pitched, not man." This is conclusive evidence of the superiority of the high priesthood of Christ and his ministry over that of those who were after the order of Aaron. It is also further proof of the eternal nature of the church; for it existed in the mind of God when Moses was receiving instructions regarding the building of the tabernacle. (Cf. Eph. 3: 8-11.)

## A Confirmatory and Transitional Statement

(Heb. 8: 6, 7)

*But now hath he obtained a ministry the more excellent, by so much as he is also the mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second.*

The more excellent ministry of Christ, over that of the Levitical priesthood, is due to the fact that his ministry is in a higher sphere—heavenly things; and has to do with the spirit, rather than with the flesh. Here again, as in Heb. 7: 11, 12, Paul shows that the priesthood and the law, which is based upon it, are inseparably bound together, so much so that a greater ministry also implies a greater law. Moses was the mediator of the old covenant (Ex. 20: 18-21; Gal. 3: 19, 20), and it appears that he was succeeded in this position by the high priest; for during the Jewish dispensation, it was the high priest who stood between God and the people, in so far as their worship and service were concerned. But under the terms of the new covenant, Christ, as we gather from Heb. 3: 1, did the work of both Moses and the high priest. The term "mediator" means one who intervenes or goes between two parties as an interpreter, an intercessor, or a reconciler. (Cf. 1 Tim. 2: 5; 2 Cor. 5: 18, 19.) The better promises of the new covenant are the spiritual promises, which stand in sharp contrast with the fleshly aspect of the old covenant.

It has been repeatedly pointed out that the old covenant was the one which was given through Moses, and it is the one which is being contrasted with the one which we are under today. The terms "fault" and "faultless," which are used in the chapter we are now considering, do not imply that the law of Moses had mistakes in it; and that is not the idea which Paul meant to convey. (Cf. Psalm 19: 7-11; Rom. 7: 12.) The law was faulty in that it was not sufficiently to accomplish God's ultimate purpose regarding the human race. This same idea is set forth in Heb. 7: 11. The law of Moses was never intended to be the instrument of man's final salvation. "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." (Gal. 3: 21; cf. 2: 16, 21; 3: 11; Rom. 3: 20; Acts 13: 38, 39.) The Jews made the mistake of regarding the old law as being sufficient to save Israel according to the flesh. (See Rom. 10: 1-3.)

God had a purpose in giving the law of Moses, and there is no intimation in all the Bible that he was disappointed in that purpose. The law separated the Jews from all other people, and it appears that during the time that the law was in force, God was permitting the Jews and the Gentiles to demonstrate two essential truths, namely, (1) He was allowing the Jews to demonstrate that no one can be saved by merely keeping a law. (Rom. 3: 19, 20.) (2) At the same time, God was allowing the Gentiles to demonstrate that natural religion, that is, morality or moral religion, was wholly inadequate for the needs of sinful humanity. (See Rom. 2: 11-16.) These two demonstrations issued forth in two definite results: (1) All men are shut up under sin (Gal. 3: 22; Rom. 3: 9, 10, 23; 11: 32); and (2) in the fulness of time Christ was sent to redeem all who would accept his offer of salvation (Gal. 4: 4, 5; 1 John 4: 14).

### Christ's More Excellent Ministry Implies a Better Covenant

(Heb. 8: 8-13)

*For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them forth out of the land of Egypt; for they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put their laws into their mind, and on their heart also will I write them: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his fellow-citizen, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to*

*the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and their sins will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. But that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away.*

In saying that Jehovah found "fault with them," the reference is to the people who were under the first covenant, that is, the children of Israel. They were continually violating his law, as may be seen by reading their history. They were, of course, unable to keep a perfect law, as Jehovah, of course, knew; and that was the situation behind the proposal to make a new covenant. It is interesting to observe that apostolic preachers frequently fortified their remarks regarding a new order of things by quotations from the Old Testament which, no doubt, caused many of their hearers or readers to react more favorably to that which was being said. (Cf. Acts 2: 14 *ft.*) Fair minded people would be able to see that that which was being advocated was not, after all, as revolutionary as some might think. (Cf. Acts 17: 1-13.) Jeremiah had clearly predicted that there would be a new covenant (Jer. 31: 31-34); but it might be well to observe that even that prophet was not too popular with his people during his day.

We have no way of knowing just how the people to whom Paul wrote reacted to his reasoning regarding the new covenant, but we do know that people today who claim to be students of the Scriptures and friendly toward the Lord are, it seems, wholly unable to see the difference in the application of the two covenants. When Alexander Campbell preached his famous sermon on The Law, the reaction was nothing short of violent on the part of some of the preachers with whom he had been working. Both Jeremiah and Paul call attention to the fact that Jehovah said that the new covenant would not be like the old one, they went into detail to describe the difference. Instead of writing the laws on tables of stone and the materials which were used for such purposes in the days of Moses, God proposed to put his word into the hearts of his people. Children were born into the old covenant, and were later taught to know and honor the Lord; but

under the terms of the new covenant, people must be taught the truth first, and then obey when they have learned. Cf. John 6: 44, 45; Matt. 28: 19, 20.)

Instead of sins being completely forgiven during the time of the old covenant, they were remembered again each year (Heb. 10: 1-4), but in the case of the new covenant, sins are entirely forgiven when the Lord's terms are complied with. So complete was the forgiveness that the people so blessed are referred to as new creatures. (2 Cor. 5: 17; Tit. 3: 5.) Those who were sinners before they responded to the gospel call are,

after their obedience, righteous in the sight of God. This is what Paul calls "reckoned" or "imputed" righteousness in the Roman letter. Those who become the Lord's people under the terms of the new covenant are treated as if they had never sinned. Paul goes on to say that a "new covenant" automatically implies that the first one had been made old. The old one, as a religious obligation on the people, was removed when Jesus died on the cross (Col. 2: 14); but it appears that as a civil institution it continued until the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70, at which time the Jewish economy came to an end.

### Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?  
Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

#### Introduction

According to what plan was the Bible written?

What is the great purpose of the Bible?

Into what three great parts is Bible history divided?

Why is it important that students of the Scriptures recognize and understand this truth?

What was the first written law or covenant?

Discuss its nature and purpose.

#### The Golden Text

Why was it necessary that a new covenant be made?

Under what circumstances did Christ become a priest?

What is meant by saying that he became the surety of a better covenant?

What great difference does this make?

#### The Sphere of Christ's High Priestly Ministry

What specific conclusion did Paul state at the beginning of this section of the text?

What is implied by saying that Christ is at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven?

What is the apostle's aim in this section of his discussion of the work of Christ?

Where is the priestly function of Christ performed?

What are the "sanctuary" and the "true tabernacle"?

What are the principle functions of the high priest?

Why couldn't Jesus be a priest if he were on earth?

How do we know that the law was not in force at the time Paul wrote Hebrews?

What lesson do we learn from the apostle's reference to Moses and the tabernacle?

What was the pattern that Moses was instructed to follow?

What does this teach us regarding the church?

#### A Confirmatory and Transitional Statement

Why is the ministry of Christ more excellent than that of the Levitical order?

What further emphasis does the writer give regarding the priesthood and the law?

Why are they inseparably bound together?

What is meant by saying that Christ is the mediator of a better covenant?

How does he compare with Moses in this respect?

In what sense was the old covenant "not" faultless?

What does the Bible teach regarding the nature of the law?

Discuss God's purpose in giving the law and the outcome of the purpose.

#### Christ's More Excellent Ministry Implies a Better Covenant

What is meant by saying that Jehovah found "fault with them"?

What shows that a new covenant was needed?

What use did the apostles frequently make of the Old Testament Scriptures and why?

What lesson should that practice teach us?

Why do so many religious people apparently have difficulty in distinguishing between the old and the new covenants?

What are some of the principal differences between them?

In what sense are people not to teach people today to know the Lord?

Is it possible for people to be saved today without being taught the truth? Give reasons for your answer.

What is said regarding the forgiveness of sins under each of the covenants?

What makes the first covenant an old one?

## Lesson XII—June 21, 1964

## AN UNMOVEABLE KINGDOM

## Lesson Text

Heb. 12: 18-29

18 For ye are not come unto a *mount* that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

19 And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which *voice* they that heard entreated that no word more should be spoken unto them;

20 For they could not endure that which was enjoined, If even a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned;

21 And so fearful was the appearance, *that* Mó'-ses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:

22 But ye are come unto mount Zi-on, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Je-ru'-sa-lem, and to innumerable hosts of angels,

23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

24 And to Je'-sus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than *that* of Abel.

25 See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not when they refused him that warned *them* on earth, much more shall *not* we *escape* who turn away from him that *warneth* from heaven:

26 Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven,

27 And this *word*, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain.

28 Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe:

29 For our God is a consuming fire.

**Golden Text.**—“*And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever*”

(Luke 1: 33.)

**Devotional Reading.**—Heb. 12: 1-17.

## Daily Bible Readings

June 15.	M.....	The Disciples Prayed for It (Matt. 6: 1-13)
June 16.	T.....	It Is Not of This World (John 18: 36-38)
June 17.	W.....	To Enter It One Must Be Bom Again (John 3: 1-8)
June 18.	T.....	Unrighteous Cannot Inherit It (1 Cor. 6: 1-9)
June 19.	F.....	It Shall Stand for Ever (Dan. 2: 36-49)
June 20.	S.....	We Are to Seek It First (Matt. 6: 25-34)
June 21.	S.	The Kingdom Is Righteousness, Peace and Joy (Rom. 14: 1-17)

**Time.**—A.D. 63 or 64.

**Place.**—Rome

**Persons.**—Probably Paul and some Hebrew Christians.

## Introduction

The lesson which we are to study today may be regarded as a kind of climax to the arguments which the writer of Hebrews makes throughout the book to show that the old order of the Jewish dispensation has passed away, and that we now have the enduring kingdom of the Lord. The history of the world is characterized by the rise and fall of kingdoms, and it will continue to be so as long as

time endures; but the Lord wants his people to know that there is something which cannot be removed, and that is the kingdom or church which bears the name of Christ. Even the elaborate system of Judaism which was ordained by Jehovah himself and which had claimed the devotion and service of his people for fifteen hundred years, had to give way to the new order which Christ, as God's

final spokesman to the human race, came to inaugurate. The formal inauguration of the church or kingdom of Christ is set forth in the second chapter of Acts, and it is easy for the student to see that the entire revelation of the Lord which came before was leading up to that great event.

The time element in this study is very important, that is, the time when the law of Moses was no longer recognized as an authoritative system. It has been repeatedly pointed out that the old law, as a binding religious code, passed away with the death of Christ upon the cross (Col. 2: 14); but it appears that for wise and benevolent reasons the old order was allowed to remain, to some degree at least, until sufficient teaching could be done to show the difference between the system of Moses and that of Christ, before it was completely destroyed. This conclusion, it seems, can be fairly drawn from such scriptures as Acts 21: 17-26. The end of the law was definite, but it appears that God was patient with his people until they had both the time and the opportunity to learn the truth regarding it. There would come a time when the observance of the law would be for ever over, and the writer of Hebrews apparently saw the day coming (cf. Heb. 10: 26, 37). The "coming One" was evidently Christ, not his personal coming to

judge the world at the end of time, but his *providential* coming for the destruction of Jerusalem and the removal of the Jewish commonwealth. (Cf. Matt. 24: 15-22.) Hebrews was written some six or seven years before the day of destruction came.

That which cannot be shaken refers particularly to the kingdom of Christ, or, as the subject of the lesson has it, the immovable kingdom. Judaism passed away, but the church which Jesus built shall continue as long as time shall last. There are many references to this fact scattered throughout the Bible, and they are all intended to emphasize the enduring nature of the work of Christ. Three of those references are given here, namely, (1) "And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom *which shall never be destroyed*, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, *and it shall stand for ever.*" (Dan. 2: 44.) (2) "And

I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; *and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.*" (Matt. 16: 18.) (3) "Wherefore, receiving a kingdom *that cannot be shaken*, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe: for our God is a consuming fire." (Heb. 12: 28, 29.)

### The Golden Text

"*And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever.*" These words are a part of the statement which the angel made to Mary regarding the child whom she would bear, and whom she was instructed to call JESUS. The complete sentence in which the words of the golden text are found reads as follows: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke 1: 32, 33.) Later on, when the day of Pentecost came, just after the ascension of Christ, Peter said regarding David, "Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins he would set one upon his throne; he foreseeing this spake of the resurrec-

tion of Christ that neither was he left unto Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption." (Acts 2: 30, 31.)

The kingdom over which David ruled was a literal, fleshly kingdom; but it became the type of the spiritual kingdom over which Christ rules. David wanted to build a temple for Jehovah, but God would not permit that. On the contrary, he instructed Nathan the prophet to tell David two specific things, namely, (1) that his son would build the temple, and (2) that the kingdom and his "throne shall be established for ever." (See 2 Sam. 7: 1-16.) The son who built the temple, of course, was Solomon; but the writer of Hebrews quotes from this prophecy and applies it to Christ. (Heb. 1: 5.) This is to say that the primary reference was to Solomon, while the secondary reference was to Christ. However, Paul's purpose in quoting from Samuel was



not regarding the throne, but to emphasize the sonship of Christ, that is, the relation which exists between him and the Father.

The last king to sit upon the literal throne of David, that is, the one farthest away from him in the order of descent, was Jehoiachin, also known as Jeconiah and Coniah. (See Jer. 22: 24-30.) Zedekiah who followed him on the throne was a descendant of David, but not a descendant of Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24: 17). 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 overturn, 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 from Ezekiel 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 exalted him to the throne of his father David, where he will reign until the last enemy shall be destroyed. (See 1 Cor. 15: 24-28.)

### The Text Explained

#### The Contrast between Mount Sinai and Mount Zion

(Heb. 12: 18-24)

*For ye are not come unto a mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that no word more should be spoken unto them; for they could not endure that which was enjoined, If even a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned; and so fearful was the appearance, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake: but ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel.*

This passage should be viewed as a whole; for it is the inspired contrast between the old order and the new: between the giving of the law on mount Sinai and the new covenant of which Jesus is the mediator. It has already been pointed out in these studies that Paul's purpose in writing Hebrews was to warn the Jewish Christians against the danger

of apostasy which confronted them, and to lead them back to active faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The preceding paragraph of chapter 12 (verses 14-17) is devoted to warnings and exhortations; and the "for" with which the paragraph now under consideration begins, shows that there is a direct connection between the two sections. The example of Esau's irrevocable loss of the blessing which Isaac meant to bestow upon him is a fitting introduction to the final great warning which Paul sets before his readers.

There are several passages in the writings of Moses which describes the scenes at Sinai, as for example, "And ye came near and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire unto the heart of heaven, with darkness, cloud, and thick darkness." (Deut. 4: 11.) "And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: no hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, he shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount." (Ex. 19: 12, 13.) When all the awe-inspiring sights and sound were perceived by the people, and when they heard the voice of God, they were greatly afraid, and asked that Moses

speak to them instead of God. (See Ex. 20: 18-21; Deut. 5: 23-27.)

In giving the law at mount Sinai, three things were stressed, namely, (1) the majesty of God; (2) his absolute unapproachability; and (3) his terror. All of this filled the people with such awe as to make them afraid either to look toward God or to listen. All of these things pertained to the law which some of the readers of Hebrews apparently desired to return; and it was Paul's aim to enable them to see afresh the terrifying experiences which accompanied the giving of that law. But in verse 22 the other side of the picture begins. If they want to go back to the old order, then all they can expect is God's lonely majesty, his complete separation from man, and prostrating fear. But if they are willing to abide with Christ, there is the new covenant and with it a new relationship with God.

And so, instead of returning to the terrifying experience at Sinai, Paul would have the somewhat confused Christians take their stand before the reassuring spiritual mount Zion; for it is there that they are brought into fellowship with eternal realities. The apostle had previously written to the Philippian brethren, and had said, "For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." (Phil. 3: 20.) Beginning with verse 22 of the lesson text, Paul describes the meeting place of God and his people—the place where God manifests his presence, and where his people dwell. (Cf. Eph. 2: 19-22; Matt. 18: 20.)

After having named the place of meeting, the writer begins to tell who are there. He mentions first an innumerable host of angels, and the saints in joyful convocation. The original word for "general assembly" means a *festal gathering*. This, again, is in sharp contrast with the terror-stricken multitude at Sinai. The "church of the firstborn" (the term "firstborn" is plural, as may be seen from the text—"who *are* enrolled in heaven") means the church of the Lord, or those people who have been born into his kingdom and have not parted with the birthright, but have retained their privileges as the first-born (cf. Heb. 12: 16); and they are enrolled in heaven (cf. Phil. 4: 3).

This figure is no doubt based on the well-known practice of city officials who inscribed the names of all their citizens on tables or scrolls.

God, the final Judge of all, before whom every individual must stand or fall, is the great Center of the realities to which his people have been introduced; and he will assign, without appeal, each soul to his own destiny. Those who are faithful to Christ have nothing to fear; for he has promised to confess their names before the Father and the holy angels (cf. Matt. 10: 32, 33; 13: 49, 50; 2 Thess. 1: 7-9). The "spirits of just men made perfect" probably includes all who have died in God's favor since Abel. (cf. Heb. 11: 40.) In commenting on "Jesus the mediator of a new covenant," William Barclay notes "that it was Jesus who made this new relationship with God possible; it was Jesus who took away the terror of mount Sinai and gave to men the glory of the new relationship with God; it was Jesus, the perfect priest and the perfect sacrifice, who made the unapproachable approachable, and who took away the terror of God. And he did this at the cost of his blood; that is to say he had to die before this was possible. So the writer to the Hebrews ends this section with a curious contrast between the blood of Abel and the blood of Jesus. When Abel was slain his blood upon the ground called for vengeance. (Gen. 4: 10.) His death was something which called for revenge. But when Jesus was slain, his blood, his death did not call for vengeance; it opened the way of reconciliation. His life, his death, his sacrifice made it possible for man to be friends with God."

### A Final Warning

(Heb. 12: 25, 26)

*See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not when they refused him that warned them on earth, much more shall not we escape who turn away from him that warneth from heaven: whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven.*

Earlier in the epistle now before us, the writer had given voice to several warnings, as for example, (1) the warning against neglect, Heb.

2: 1-4; (2) the warning against unbelief, Heb. 3: 7-4: 13; (3) the warning against falling away, Heb. 5: 11-6: 20; and (4) the warning against wilful sin, Heb. 10: 26-31. Paul made it plain in the very first part of Hebrews that God speaks today through his Son, and that he is his final spokesman to the human race. The fifth and final warning of this section of the lesson text is apparently meant to emphasize the contrast between Moses and Christ. God spoke through Moses at Sinai, but he speaks through Christ now; and furthermore, his message through Christ is final and will continue to be in force as long as the world continues. (Cf. Jude 3; Matt. 24: 35.) The Old Testament record makes it plain, as does Paul's statement here, that those who refused to hear Moses did not escape punishment; and the conclusion is even more certain that the people of the new dispensation will not escape, if they refuse to hear Jesus. (Cf. Heb. 2: 1-3; 10: 28-31; Luke 10: 16.)

The quotation regarding the shaking of earth and heaven is taken from Hag. 2: 6, probably the Septuagint Version, which was in common use during the days of Christ and the apostles. The shaking of the earth took place when Jehovah spoke from Sinai (cf. Ex. 19: 18; Psalm 68: 7, 8), while the shaking of heaven, as indicated in Haggai, had reference to the revolutions which resulted from the first coming of Christ. (Read the full context in Haggai.) But Paul, as he customarily did, adapted the quotation to the question in hand and made a special application of it, as is clearly seen in the next section of the lesson text.

### The Transitory vs. the Enduring

(Heb. 12: 27-29)

*And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain. Wherefore, receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe: for our God is a consuming fire.*

The expression "yet once more" indicates the finality of this predicted manifestation of God—for the last

time. The shaking of the heaven, as Paul viewed the matter, would demonstrate two things, namely, (1) the removal of some things; and (2) the endurance of some things. The shaking predicted by Haggai, as already pointed out, referred to the changes which would take place when Christ removed the old order, and established the new; all that was typical and preparatory would be destroyed, and the new would be set in motion. But Paul and other New Testament writers apparently teach that the "shaking" which would take place under Christ would not be limited to the removal of the old, and the inauguration of the new; but that it will continue until "the kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ." (See Rev. 11: 15.)

For example, Paul, in speaking of the reign of Christ, says, "For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be abolished is death. For, He put all things in subjection under his feet. But when he saith, All things are put in subjection, it is evident that he is excepted who did subject all things unto him. And when all things have been subjected unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subjected to him that did subject all things unto him, that God may be all in all." (1 Cor. 15: 25-28.) This work of Christ can be completed only when all opposition to his reign has been destroyed. "Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power." (1 Cor. 15: 24; cf. Eph. 6: 10-12.)

The exhortation contained in verse 28 of the lesson text is based on the fact that we Christians have received a kingdom which cannot be shaken, as the old Jewish economy and other institutions and standards were. This is the kingdom which Daniel said will never be destroyed; it is the church against which Christ declares the gates of Hades shall never prevail, that is, gain the ascendancy or win a victory over (Arndt-Gingrich). In commenting on the Lord's statement here, Thayer notes that "not even the gates of Hades—than which nothing was supposed to be stronger — shall surpass the church in

strength." The literal reading in Matthew (16: 18) is, "And the gates of Hades shall not prevail against *her*." The pronoun "it" is in the feminine gender.

The expression "let us have grace" is usually understood to mean, let us gratefully accept all that which God has so graciously provided for us, so that we may offer service which is well-pleasing to him with reverence, that is, with the proper respect for him, and awe, that is, pious care. The original word for "awe" is found in the New Testament only here and in Heb. 5: 7, where it is rendered godly fear, or, which is the same thing, piety—"and because of his piety his prayer was heard" (Goodspeed).

The reason which is assigned for our having the attitude just mentioned is, "for our God is a consuming fire." (Cf. Deut. 4: 24.) This is to say that the God in whom we hope is also one to be feared, that is, respected. He is a God of mercy, and

he is also a God of punitive righteousness. (Cf. Heb. 2: 1-4; 2 Thess. 1: 7-9; Heb. 10: 26-31.) God has provided all the blessings and privileges of the unshakable kingdom for us, and his anger will burn against all who reject them. In the words of Clarence S. Roddy, "All things are moving toward that day when the righteous judge of the earth will consummate his purpose in Christ Jesus. This judge, who is a consuming fire, will burn up everything evil in his world. Words cannot describe the great and terrible Day of the Lord. In that day only the unshakable realities of eternity will remain. God's eternal word, God's eternal love, and God's eternal will seen in his church will survive. New heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness will supplant the world and the age of decay and death, and the saints shall inherit eternal life. What more encouragement to continue on do we need? What more can be given?"

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

How is the lesson for today related to the Book of Hebrews as a whole?  
What is the principal idea which the Lord wants his people to realize?  
What is the central point in the Lord's revelation to the human race?  
Why is the time element important in this lesson?  
Discuss the final phases of the law of Moses in its application to the people under it.  
What does the writer of Hebrews refer to as unshakable?  
What proof do we have that the kingdom or church cannot be destroyed?

### The Golden Text

Under what circumstance were the words of the golden text spoken?  
What promise was made to David regarding his throne?  
How do we know that Christ is sitting on that throne?

### The Contrast between Mount Sinai and Mount Zion

What does the contrast between mount Sinai and mount Zion enable the reader to see?  
In what way is this section of the lesson text related to the preceding paragraph?  
Discuss the Old Testament description of Sinai at the time of the giving of the law?  
What three important things were stressed at that time?

What effect did these things have on the people?  
What was Paul's purpose in emphasizing them?  
In what way did the apostle describe mount Zion?  
What difference in the attitude of the two congregations at Sinai and Zion is noted?  
What is meant by the "church of the firstborn"?  
What contrast is set forth between the blood of Abel and that of Christ?  
What is said regarding God as the final judge?  
What is the meaning of *Jesus* as the mediator of a new covenant?

### A Final Warning

What other warnings are set forth in the Book of Hebrews?  
What is the final warning and its purpose?  
What will happen to those who refuse it?

### The Transitory Versus the Enduring

What is the significance of the expression "yet once more"?  
What is meant by the shaking of the heaven?  
How long will the shaking continue?  
What will be the final result?  
What is the basis for the exhortation in verse 28?  
What is this kingdom which Christians have received?  
Why can't it be shaken?  
What is meant by the expression "let us have grace"?  
What kind of service is pleasing to the Lord?  
What is meant by "reverence" and "awe"?  
In what sense is God a consuming fire?

Lesson XIII—June 28, 1964

CHRISTIAN DUTIES

Lesson Text

Heb. 13: 1-16

1 Let love of the brethren continue.

2 Forget not to show love unto strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

3 Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; them that are ill-treated, as being yourselves also in the body.

4 *Let* marriage be had in honor among all, and *let* the bed be undefiled: for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

5 Be ye free from the love of money; content with such things as ye have: for himself hath saith, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee.

6 So that with good courage we say,  
The Lord is my helper: I will not fear:  
What shall man do unto me?  
7 Remember them that had the rule over you. men that spake unto you the word of God; and considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith.

8 Je'-sus Christ *is* the same yesterday and to-day, *yea* and for ever.

9 Be not carried away by divers and strange teachings: for it is good that the heart be established by grace; not by meats, wherein they that occupied themselves were not profited.

10 We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat that serve the tabernacle.

11 For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest *as an offering* for sin, are burned without the camp.

12 Wherefore Je'-sus also, that he might sanctify the people through his own blood, suffered without the gate.

13 Let us therefore go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

14 For we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after *the city* which is to come.

15 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.

16 But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

**Golden Text.**—“*Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God.*”

(1 John 4: 7.)

**Devotional Reading.**—Heb. 13: 17-25.

Daily Bible Readings

June 22. M.....	Man's Whole Duty (Eccles. 12: 1-13)
June 23. T.....	Must Be Obedient (Matt. 7: 15-27)
June 24. W.....	Eternal Life Only to the Obedient (Rom. 2: 1-16)
June 25. T.....	Duties to God (Deut. 5: 1-15)
June 26. F.....	Duties to Man (Deut. 5: 16-21)
June 27. S.....	Faithfulness to the End (Rev. 2: 1-10)
June 28. S.....	Do His Will, Abide Forever (1 John 2: 1-17)

**Time.**—A.D. 63 or 64.

**Place.**—Rome

**Persons.**—Probably Paul and some Hebrew Christians.

Introduction

It is interesting to observe that in every letter which inspired men wrote to Christian people, a large portion was devoted to putting into practice that which is taught. The over-all purpose of all teaching regarding the Lord's plan of salvation

must be reduced to practice, if the Lord is to be pleased. This has always been true, as may be clearly seen by reading the eleventh chapter of the book we are now studying. When Paul finished that portion of the epistle, he made this application:

"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.) If we expect to dwell with God in eternity we must accomplish our work, just as Christ did his, that is, with the same kind of faithfulness. (Cf. John 17: 4; 2 Tim. 4: 6-8; James 2: 10; 4: 17.)

It makes little difference what one knows from the doctrinal standpoint, if he does not put into practice that which is required of him. The lessons which we have studied in the Hebrew letter have emphasized the superiority of the Christian system, over that of the Old Testament order; and it is fitting that the series of lessons should close with instruction in Christian living. When Jesus gave the great commission, as recorded by Matthew, he said, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the

Holy Spirit: *teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you*: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. 28: 19, 20.) The first sermon which was preached under this commission is recorded in Acts 2, and verse 41 of that chapter tells something of the results which followed.

It is interesting to note that the very first thing which is said of the newly organized church is with reference to its faithful observance of those things which they had been taught to do. "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers." (Acts 2: 42.) These words set forth the characteristic marks of the Christian life to which the members of the first church were pledged by their acceptance of the gospel message. God himself set the apostles in the church (1 Cor. 12: 28), and they constituted the visible center of unity of the newly established body of Christ. The new disciples were gathered around them, and from them the doctrine and discipline of the infant church proceeded. The instruction in the lesson now before us proceeds upon the same basis, namely, that of apostolic doctrine. (Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17.)

### The Golden Text

*"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God."* There is no possible way to avoid the force of this exhortation. In writing to the Corinthians, Paul says, "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." (1 Cor. 13: 1-3.) In preaching the gospel to those who are not members of the Lord's church, we are wont to emphasize the apostolic remark in Heb. 11: 6, which says, "and without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto" God; but if we will only stop and think, it will be easy for us to see that the same principle applies to us with refer-

ence to love. John says, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." (1 John 4: 20, 21; cf. 1 John 3: 15.)

The context of the passage now under consideration is as follows: "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved if God so loved us, we ought to love one another." (1 John 4: 7-11.) The original words for love in the pas-

sages just quoted from John are *agapao* (verb) and *agape* (noun). This kind of love comes, not as a matter of emotion or feeling, but as the result of a moral choice. It is a much stronger word than *phileo*, which expresses natural affection, such as a parent feels for a child, or one close friend, for another. *Agapao* expresses a love which would give itself up *for* another, while *phileo* indicates a love which gives itself up *to* another.

Christian love, therefore, as The Speaker's Bible notes, is a deliberate correspondence with the declared purpose and mind of God. The root principle, at once the most difficult and most attractive of Biblical doctrines, is the doctrine that God is love. This is not an obvious point

by any means, but it is the central point of that positive self-disclosure of God which the Bible conveys to us, and the central meaning of the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. The meaning of the incarnation is that the real character of the Being who made and rules the world has been for us translated out of that difficult and unintelligible region of abstract things beyond our sight into the intelligible lineaments of a Divine-human character, that of Jesus of Nazareth, which all can understand. And it is through Jesus that we have been able to learn the meaning of love; and with this kind of love in our hearts we can learn to love people we do not like, which indeed is a large part of our Christian duty.

## The Text Explained

### Personal and Social Duties

(Heb. 13: 1-6)

*Let love of the brethren continue. Forget not to show love unto strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; them that are ill-treated, as being yourselves also in the body.*

The manner in which this portion of the lesson text opens indicates that there was no reason for Paul's reproving the brethren for a lack of brotherly love. This is in keeping with the thought of the golden text, and it was the spirit which characterized the early church from the beginning. (Cf. Acts 2: 44, 45.) Acts 4: 32 says, "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." Brotherly love is one of the Christian graces which Peter says is essential in God's sight (see 2 Pet. 1: 5-11), Jesus calls such love the badge of discipleship (John 13: 34, 35); while John shows its supreme importance by such statements as the following: "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby know we

love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (1 John 3: 14-16.) "He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother, is in the darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in the darkness, and walketh in the darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes." (1 John 2: 9-11.)

Hospitality in earlier times was a particular virtue and filled a definite need, especially for people of high morals. In speaking of the subject of inn-keeping in the days before and after Christ, Barclay tells of two men who were discussing finding a lodging-place, when one asked the other if he knew where there were the fewest fleas. This same author continues: "When Theophrastus wrote his character sketch of the reckless man, he said that he was fit to keep an inn or run a brothel. He put both occupations on the same level. In the ancient world there was a rather wonderful system of what was called 'guest friendships.' Throughout the years families, even when they had lost active touch with each other, had an arrangement that at any time needful they would make accommodation available for each other. This hospitality was even more necessary in the circle of the

Christians. Slaves had no home of their own to which to go. Wandering preachers and prophets were always on the roads. On the ordinary business of life, Christians had journeys to make. Both their price and their moral atmosphere made the public inns impossible."

Our modern way of living has greatly modified the practice with reference to strangers, and it is possible that the need is not so widespread as it was back in Bible times; but that certainly is not a sufficient reason for ignoring the subject altogether. Great impressions for good can often be made by showing love unto strangers, in spite of the fact that many people take advantage of the hospitality of others, and impose themselves upon them, just to save the price of a hotel or motel room, when there is no actual need. But, on the other hand, there are still those who do have a real need, and good in their cases can be done by showing hospitality to them. The enemies of the religion of Christ observed this virtue among the early Christians. The apostate Julian assigns "kindness to strangers" as one of the reasons for the rapid progress of Christianity during the early days of the church. The reference to entertaining angels unawares was probably to such cases as that of Abraham (Gen. 18: 1-8) and Lot (Gen. 19: 1-11).

Sympathy for those in trouble was also a distinguishing mark of the early church. People were persecuted and often cast into prison because of their faith in Christ. Many of them were poor and no doubt in debt; and it could easily happen that because of conditions over which they had no control, they were imprisoned as a result of their being unable to meet their obligations. And sometimes mere pretexts were made the basis for unjust treatment of Christians. When any of these things took place, the brethren who were in position to do so, went to their rescue. Tertullian said, "If there happened to be any in the mines, or banished to the islands, or shut up in prisons for nothing but their fidelity to the cause of God's church, they became nurslings of their confession." And, according to Aristides, "If they hear that any one of their number is imprisoned or in distress for the sake

of their Christ's name, they all render aid in his necessity, and, if he can be redeemed, they set him free." This kind of attitude is what Jesus has reference to in Matt. 25: 31-46.

*Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled: for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.* The low moral standards of that day made this injunction imperative; and what was true then is also true today. If marriage is held in honor "among all," then all people, both the married and the unmarried, will respect it. Fornicators and adulterers include all who are guilty of improper sexual relations among both the married and the unmarried. Most people who are guilty of this sin escape human tribunals; but God will surely punish them.

*Be ye free from the love of money; content with such things as ye have: for himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee. So that with good courage we say, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear: what shall man do unto me?*

The marginal note says, *Let your turn of mind be free.* Williams renders the first part of verse 5 in these words: "You must have a turn of mind that is free from avarice; you must be content with what you have," while The New English Bible puts it this way: "Do not live for money; be content with what you have." It is a noticeable fact that Paul combines immorality and covetousness in other places in his epistles. (Cf. Eph. 5: 3-5; Col. 3: 5.) He also calls covetousness idolatry. In 1 Tim. 6: 9, 10 he says, "But they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows." "Himself" refers to God, and Paul's statement in connection with the pronoun appears to be a general adaptation of God's promise to Moses (Deut. 31: 6) and Joshua (Josh. 1: 5). This is a gracious promise which God has made to all his people. (See Matt. 6: 24-34; Phil. 4: 6, 7, 19.) The quotation in verse 6



of the lesson text is from Psalm 118:

6, and there is no better commentary on the idea which it contains than Rom. 8, and especially verses 31-39. This entire chapter should be read and studied often. (Cf. Luke 12: 4, 5.)

### Christ and Christian Truth Do Not Change

(Heb. 13: 7-9)

*Remember them that had the rule over you, men that spake unto you the word of God; and considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and forever. But not carried away by divers and strange teachings: for it is good that the heart be established by grace; not by meats, wherein they that occupied themselves have not profited.*

After discussing the personal and social duties of the Christian, Paul next passes to some instruction which is popularly, if not altogether correctly, known as their religious life, that is, something which was more directly concerned with the public work and worship of the church. Of course the Christian's entire life is his religious life, but there are some things which are more personal and social, than others; and it is to the latter that our attention is now directed. "Them that had the rule over you" were evidently elders; and the use of the past tense indicates that they had already passed to their reward. Verse 7 should be read and studied along with verse 17, which evidently has reference to elders who were still alive at the time the epistle was written. The elders of verse 7 did two things namely, (1) they had the rule over the church, and (2) they spoke the word of the Lord to the people who made up the congregation where they served; and the brethren are likewise called on (1) to consider the issue, that is, the result or outcome, or, as Thayer has it, "the manner in which they closed a well-spent life as exhibited by their spirit in dying" (the original word for "issue" occurs one other time in the New Testament—1 Cor. 10: 13—and it is rendered "way of escape" in that passage); and (2) imitate their faith.

Inasmuch as the elders who had Passed on died in the triumph of a

living faith, because of their personal faith in Jesus; and since he was worthy of their trust and sacrifice, he is also worthy of the confidence and obedience of those who were taught by them. Jesus never changes, and he will do for us that which he did for our fathers who were loyal to him; for he abideth faithful, and cannot deny himself. (Cf. 2 Tim. 2: 13.) It is therefore the duty of every Christian to be faithful to this changeless Christ, and not allow themselves to be led astray by divers and strange teachings. This can be accomplished only if the heart is established, that is, made firm or strengthened by God's grace, rather than by the teaching of the Judaizers and other Jewish leaders regarding animal sacrifice and the eating or non-eating of meat. (Cf. Rom. 14: 17.)

### A Final Contrast between the Old and New Covenants

(Heb. 13: 10-16)

*We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat that serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people through his own blood suffered without the gate. Let us therefore go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come. 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.*

Whatever may have been the specific thing which Paul had in mind when he said, "We have an altar" it evidently has to do with Christ, his cross, and the saving benefits of his death; and he makes it plain that those who serve the tabernacle, that is, those who still cling to the old order of things, have no part nor lot in those blessings. The old order of things and Christianity are mutually exclusive; for the one had to be taken away, before the other could be brought in. And in order to illustrate his point, the writer of the

Hebrew letter used the rituals of the Day of Atonement. The animals which were sacrificed that day, that is, the animals whose blood was taken by the high Priest into the most holy place, had to be burned without the camp; they could not be eaten by the high priest nor by anyone else. And in a similar manner, Jesus himself died without the city; and it is his blood only which made possible the forgiveness of sins. Anyone, therefore, who desires the benefit of that sacrifice, or, which is the same thing, the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ, must forsake Judaism and go forth, figuratively, to the place where Christ died.

It was a vain thing for the people of Paul's day to seek permanent refuge in Jerusalem, the seat of Jewish worship and service, for that city, along with the whole Jewish economy, was soon to be destroyed; but, as Milligan expresses the matter, if we leave Jerusalem with all of its errors and corruptions, and follow Christ without the gate, we will thereby secure for ourselves a place in the heavenly city, or, which is the same thing, the kingdom which cannot be shaken, as described in the

lesson last week. The earthly Jerusalem is but a symbol of that which is perishing, but the Jerusalem which is above is the embodiment of all that which is spiritual, glorious, and eternal. This should be sufficient to cause us to offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name. However, the writer adds, that alone is not enough; we must also do good by a practical demonstration toward those who have need. "So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith." (Gal. 6: 10.) "Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." (James 1: 27.) "But whoso hath this world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth." (1 John 3: 17, 18.)

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

What interesting and practical observation is noted in all letters of the New Testament which are addressed to Christians?

Why is this true?

What did Jesus say regarding the matter?

How did the early church deal with this problem?

### The Golden Text

What can you say of the force of the exhortation contained in this text?

In what way does Paul illustrate this truth?

What does John say about it?

What is the nature of the love which Christians must manifest toward each other?

In what way is this love related to God?

### Personal and Social Duties

What leads us to think that the people to whom this letter is addressed loved each other?

What can you say of the practice of the early church in this respect?

Why is this love so important?

Discuss the question of hospitality during New Testament times and now?

What is the meaning of entertaining angels unawares?

How did the early Christians regard their brethren who were in trouble?

What did Paul say regarding the marriage relationship?

What is the certain fate of fornicators and adulterers?

What should be the Christian's attitude toward money?

What promise has God made regarding those who put their trust in him?

Why do so many professed believers choose money in preference to reliance upon God?

### Christ and Christian Truth Do Not Change

What exhortation does the writer of Hebrews give regarding elders?

What had the elders referred to in the text done?

What was the "issue" of their life?

How can one imitate their faith?

What is meant by saying that Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever?

How should Christians seek to establish their hearts?

What did the writer mean by the reference to "meats"?

### A Final Contrast between the Old and New Covenants

What "altar" did Paul apparently have in mind when he wrote the words of this section of the lesson text?

Why can't those who serve the tabernacle partake of this altar?

What use did the writer make of the rituals of the Day of Atonement?

What is the point regarding Jesus' suffering without the gate?

How alone could those who sought to keep the law benefit by the blood of Christ?

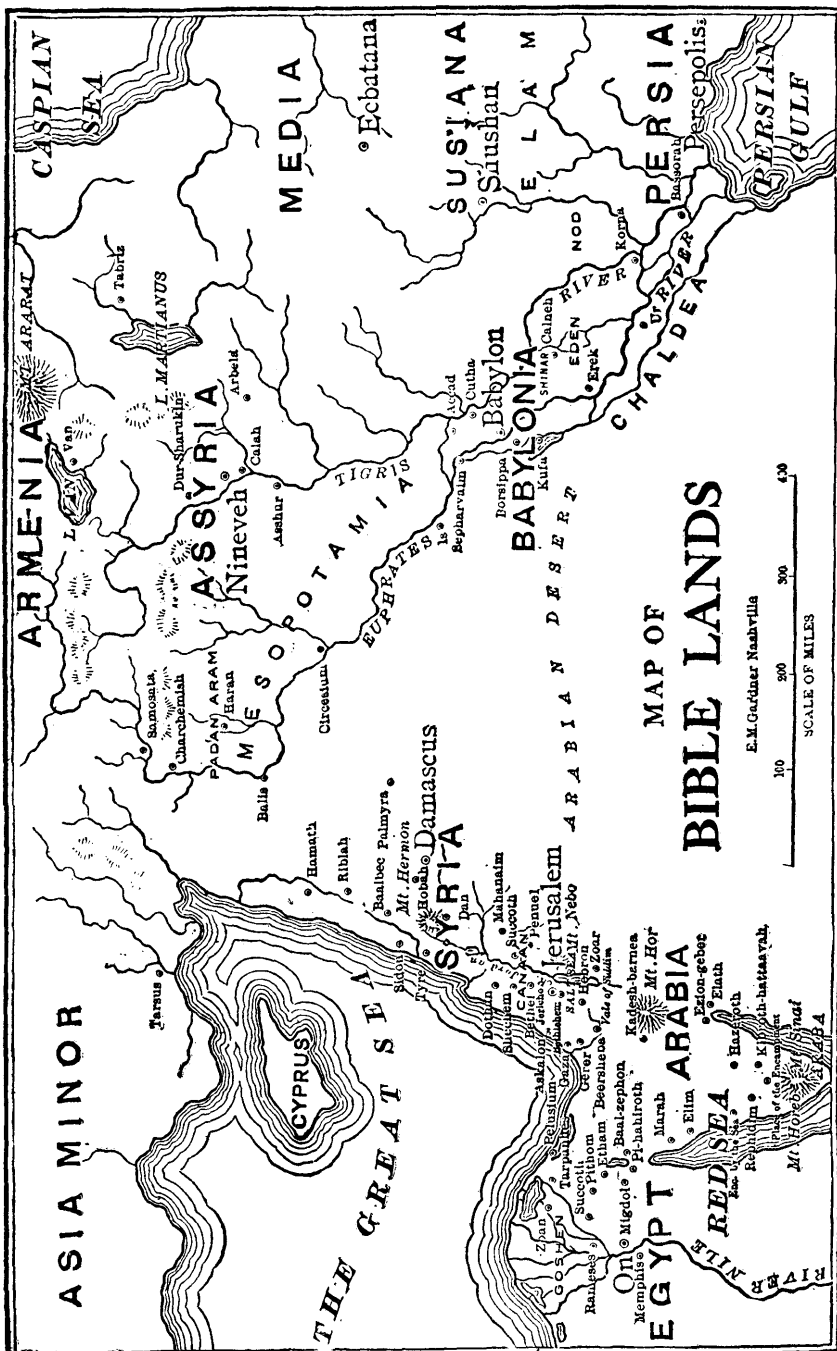
What did Paul say about seeking a city?

What did the earthly Jerusalem symbolize?

What city should we all seek?

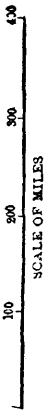
What should be the attitude of Christians in view of the teaching in this lesson?

What else must God's people do and why?



MAP OF  
BIBLE LANDS

E. M. Gardner Nashville



SCALE OF MILES

# Third Quarter

## THE MAJOR PROPHETS

### (Second Half of Six Months' Course)

*AIM.—To acquaint ourselves with that period of Old Testament history when God spoke to his people through the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and, Ezekiel; to observe the holy zeal for righteousness which influenced these men of God; and to imbibe the spirit of devotion which ever characterized them.*

#### Lesson I—July 5, 1964

### JEREMIAH WEEPS OVER ZION

#### Lesson Text

#### Jer. 9: 1-10

1 Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!

2 Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they are all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men.

3 And they bend their tongue, *as it were* their bow, for falsehood; and they are grown strong in the land, but not for truth: for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith Je-ho'-vah.

4 Take ye heed every one of his neighbor, and trust ye not in any brother; for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbor will go about with slanders.

5 And they will deceive every one his neighbor, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies; they weary themselves to commit iniquity.

6 Thy habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith Je-ho'-vah.

7 Therefore thus saith Je-ho'-vah of hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them; for how *else* should I do, because of the daughter of my people?

8 Their tongue is a deadly arrow, it speaketh deceit: one *speaketh* peaceably to his neighbor with his mouth, but in his heart he layeth wait for him.

9 Shall I not visit them for these things? saith Je-ho'-vah; shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

10 For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the pastures of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burned up, so that none passeth through; neither can men hear the voice of the cattle; both the birds of the heavens and the beasts are fled, they are gone.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.*” (Jer. 8: 20.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Jer. 9: 12-16.

#### Daily Bible Readings

June 29. M.....	A Picture of Judah's Guilt (Jer. 5: 1-13)
June 30. T.....	Destruction Threatened (Jer. 5: 14-31)
July 1. W.....	Jehovah Has Rejected Judah (Jer. 7: 27-34)
July 2. T.....	Jeremiah Weeps Over Judah (Jer. 9: 10-16)
July 3. F.....	Desolation of Judah Bewailed (Jer. 10: 19-25)
July 4. S.....	Judah in Mourning (Jer. 14: 2-12)
July 5. S.....	Grievous Distresses Impending (Jer. 16: 1-15)

TIME.—Probably about 608-606 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, Jeremiah, and the people of Judah.

## Introduction

it was pointed out in an earlier lesson that Jeremiah has incorrectly been called "this weeping prophet." He did indeed have tears for his people, but that side of Jeremiah was by no means his distinguishing characteristic. In speaking of him, *The New Bible Dictionary* says, "Jeremiah's personality is the most sharply etched of any of the Old Testament prophets. Indeed, it is not exaggeration to say that in order to understand what the Old Testament means by the term prophet it is necessary to study the Book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah's call, his vocation as a bearer of the word of God, the authority which this communicated to him, the manner in which the word was revealed to him, his clear-cut distinctions between the true prophet and the false, his message and the agonizing dilemmas in which his fidelity to it entangled him—all are delineated in Jeremiah's oracles with an authority that is irresistible. This is because of the correlation between the prophet's spiritual and emotional experience and his prophetic ministry."

"His emotions are vividly exhibited even in his discourses. From the content of his preaching it is plain that Jeremiah was a man of marked contrasts. He was at once gentle and tenacious, affectionate and inflexible. In him the frailties of the flesh contended with the energies of the spirit. The natural aspirations of youth

were to the youthful prophet denied. He insisted on repentance from a people who were incapable of contrition. He unmasked the nation's sins and broadcast its judgment knowing that it would end in futility. Those whom he loved hated him. A loyal patriot, he was branded a traitor. This prophet of undying hope had to exhibit the fallacy of his people's hope. This priestly intercessor was commanded to intercede no more. This lover of Judah was by Judah maligned."

With these facts before us, it is not difficult to understand why Jeremiah wept for his people. He was, to a large extent, characterized by the same spirit which actuated Jesus in his attitude toward Jerusalem: "And when he drew nigh, he saw the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, when thine enemies shall cast up a bank about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall dash thee to the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." (Luke 19: 41-44.) There are few things which bring greater distress to the heart than to see evil coming upon those whom we love. (Cf. Acts 20: 31.)

## The Golden Text

*"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."* The harvest time, as a rule, is a happy occasion. When all the dangers which have threatened the seed, since they were first put into the ground, have past, and the time has arrived for the ingathering, those who were responsible for the cultivation of the crop usually go about the work of bringing it in with a sense of satisfaction. But along with the joyous atmosphere there is also a somber note; for there is always something about the fall of the year which tends to make us thoughtful. Autumn is the perfect parable of all that fades. In the words of Clarence Edward McCartney, "Yesterday I saw the forests in all their splendor, and Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed

like one of these. But tomorrow the rain will fall, the winds will blow, and the trees will be stripped and barren. Therefore, every returning autumn brings home to me the sense of the preciousness of life's opportunities—their beauty, but also their brevity. It fills me with the desire to say not merely something about the way that leads to life eternal but, with the help of God, something which shall move men to take the way of life *now*, Today."

An example of the weeping of Jeremiah for his people may be seen in the setting of the passage which serves as the golden text for today, and which, incidentally, is the paragraph just preceding the main lesson text. "Oh that I could comfort myself against sorrow! my heart is

faint within me. Behold, the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people from a land that is very far off: Is not Jehovah in Zion? is not her King in her? Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with foreign vanities? The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved. For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt: I mourn; dismay hath hath taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" (Jer. 8: 18-22.)

Amid the afflictions which the rebellious people brought on themselves as a result of their idolatry the prophetic ear of Jeremiah heard their cry in Babylonian exile "Is not Jehovah in Zion?" then why are we here? and the answer comes ringing

back, Because you have provoked Jehovah with your idolatry. The rich man in Hades also cried for God's help after it was too late; and that will be the fate of the uncounted hosts who are lost eternally. The prophet knew this and fully understood what was going to happen to his people; and it was for that reason that he wept over them and tried in vain to show them that they were allowing their opportunities for salvation to get beyond their reach. "The harvest is past the summer is ended and we are not saved." The rebellious Jews would have ample time when it was too late to remember this. In the words of Whittier,

For of all sad words of tongue or pen

The saddest are these: "It might have been!"

### The Text Explained

#### A Lament over a Sinful People

(Jer. 9: 1-3)

*Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they are all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. And they bend their tongue, as it were their bow, for falsehood; and they are grown strong in the land, but not for truth: for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith Jehovah.*

Jeremiah, in some respects, stands alone among the prophets. He did, indeed, speak a positive message as did Isaiah and others, but the prophet we are now studying often manifested human feeling for the state and future prospects of his people. He fully realized what was going to happen to them; and it is possible that he sometimes felt like Paul did toward his brethren, when 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.) It is a noteworthy fact that it is

always the righteous who are interested in and who are willing to make the greatest sacrifices for the thoughtless and unfaithful, in order to get them to give their lives to the Lord. "Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (1 John 3: 16.)

Not only was Jeremiah grieved for the sin and hurt of his people, but he was also so disgusted with them that he wished that he had a place to which he might go, and thereby "get away from it all." (Cf. Rev. 3: 16.) It is difficult to understand why people who profess to believe in and serve the Lord will stoop to such sins as those which Jeremiah mentions—adultery, treachery, lying, double-dealing, et cetera; but when we stop to read the Lord's reply, we can easily see the answer, namely, "they know not me, saith Jehovah." When people "refuse to have God in their knowledge," he gives "them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness: full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, unmerciful: who,

knowing the ordinance of God, that they that practise such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also consent with them that practise them." (Rom. 1: 28-32.)

God's ways and man's ways are so far apart (cf. Isa. 55: 8, 9), as to make it impossible for anyone to obey the Lord without knowing his will. This is one of the many reasons for continuous emphasis on the study of the Bible on the part of the Lord's people. But notwithstanding that which is said in God's revealed word regarding all these things, there are professed followers of Christ in almost every community where the church is, who not only take no interest in Bible study classes and other means for learning the Lord's will, which are provided for them; but who actually lend their influence to the encouragement of others who do not avail themselves of the opportunities, not only for increasing their own knowledge of the word of God, but also for setting the example for others who may not realize the importance of knowing God. "And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." (John 17: 3.)

### The Desperate State of Zion

(Jer. 9: 4-6)

*Take ye heed every one of his neighbor, and trust ye not in any brother; for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbor will go about with slanders. And they will deceive every one his neighbor, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies; they weary themselves to commit iniquity. Thy habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith Jehovah.*

Man was created a perfect moral being, for the Bible tells us that he was made in the image of God (Gen. 1: 27); but he apparently did not remain in that condition very long. He transgressed God's law, with the result that he became a sinner. The writer of Ecclesiastes says, "Behold, this only have I found: that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." (Eccles. 7: 29.) This means that man, having left the way of God, sought to order

his life by his own devices. Paul sums the matter up in these words: "For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse: because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened." (Rom. 1: 20, 21.) Thus, instead of remaining loyal to God who made him, the human race has, by its own devices, created for itself a world which is largely in rebellion against God, and which eventually will be completely destroyed. (Cf. 2 Pet. 3: 8-13.)

With the kind of background just mentioned, along with the refusal to have God in their knowledge, it is easy to see why people can become so depraved. The further men get from God, the more corrupt will be their lives. When people change the truth of God for a lie, and worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator, the result is bound to be moral decay. It is certainly a deplorable situation when a good man like Jeremiah, and speaking for God, had to say to his brethren, Don't trust your neighbor, and do not put any confidence in your brother; for neither can be depended upon. The brother will utterly supplant, and the neighbor will go about with slanders. The term "supplant" literally means a "heel-catcher," and it was the name applied to the younger of the twins who were born to Isaac and Rebekah. "And after that came forth his brother, and his hand had hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob," or, as the marginal reading has it, *One that takes hold by the heel or supplants.* (Gen. 25: 26.) The expression "for every brother will utterly supplant" is rendered by Moffatt in these words: "for a brother will cheat like a Jacob."

When people reach the point at which they will deceive everyone his neighbor, and will not speak the truth, we wonder just what can be done. And when they deliberately teach their tongues to lie, and work so hard at doing wrong that they become weary, the situation indeed looks hopeless. All of that was true



in Jeremiah's day, and the text represents Jehovah as saying to the prophet, "Thy habitation is in the midst of deceit; and through deceit they refuse to know me." A morally corrupt life is incapable of knowing the God of heaven. Not only had the lives of these people been ordered on a plane beneath their possibilities; they also had followed the teaching of the false prophets, and that, of course, led them further and further away from God. Jesus says that people who *will* to do that which the Lord commands, shall be able to judge of the source of the teaching; and they shall therefore be able to lead a life which is pleasing to him. (See John 7: 17.) But if they are going to follow the way of falsehood, it will be impossible for them to know God and live in fellowship with him.

But we do not have to go back to the days of Jeremiah in order to see people who manifest the same traits which that prophet described in the text now before us. And the reason why some professed Christians are *guilty of unbecoming conduct* with each other is because they, too, are guilty of deceitful practices. But they are not deceiving anyone but themselves. In commenting on the passage now before us, Matthew Henry says, "They are so cheated into a good opinion of their own ways, the ways of their own heart, that they desire not the knowledge of my ways. Or, They are so wedded to this sinful course which they are in, and so bewitched with it, and its gains, that they will by no means admit the *knowledge of God*, because that would be a check upon them in their sins. This is the ruin of sinners, they might be taught the good knowledge of the Lord, and they will not learn it. Where no knowledge of God is, what good can be expected?" (Cf. Hos. 4: 1.) And what was true of Israel is also true today.

#### God's Threatened Judgment

(Jer. 9: 7-10)

*Therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them; for how else should I do, because of the daughter of my people? Their tongue is a deadly arrow: it speaketh deceit: one speaketh*

*peaceably to his neighbor with his mouth, but in his heart he layeth wait for him. Shall I not visit them for these things? saith Jehovah; shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?*

Jehovah's method of dealing with his sinful people was to melt, that is, smelt them for the purpose of refining them. God had said through Isaiah, about one hundred years earlier, "And I will turn my hand upon thee, and throughly purge away thy dross, and will take away all thy tin [*alloy*, margin]." (Isa. 1: 25.) And speaking of his personal life, Job exclaimed, "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." (Job 23: 10.) The melting which Jehovah proposed to do would be accomplished by the Babylonian captivity; and it is a fact worthy of remembering that after the Jews returned from that exile, they never again bowed before an idol, so far as the record is concerned.

It was near this same time that Habakkuk said to Jehovah, "Art not thou from everlasting, O Jehovah my God, my Holy One? we shall not die. O Jehovah, thou hast ordained him for judgment; and thou, O Rock, has established him for correction. Thou that art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and that canst not look on perverseness, wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy peace when the wicked swalloweth up the man that is more righteous than he; and makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them?" (Hab. 1: 12-14.) That godly prophet had the same difficulty which many people today have, namely, Why will the righteous Jehovah permit a people more wicked than his own to punish his people? The answer to this question is found in such passages as Isa. 10: 5-23. The Babylonians were merely the instrument which God used to punish his people, and that instrument itself was, of course, later punished and destroyed.

As long as God's people continue to sin against him, it will be necessary for him to endeavor to correct them; for that is the only thing a righteous God can do. "How else should I do?" If God loved his people, while in sin (Rom. 5: 6-8), enough to give his Son to die for

their salvation, will be not continue to love them enough to seek to correct their mistakes? The writer of Hebrews speaks at length on this subject, when he says, "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which reasoneth with you as with sons, 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 who he receiveth. It is for chastening that ye endure; God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father chasteneth 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 unto 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: 5-13.)

*For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the pastures of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burned up, so that none passeth through; neither can men hear the voice of the cattle; both the birds of the heavens and the beasts are fled, they are gone.* This is apparently a reference to the depredations of the land which were inflicted by the invading armies of the Babylonians. The ravaging of that which was once the land of milk and honey was enough to cause the prophet to weep and wail.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Why is Jeremiah often referred to as the "weeping prophet"?  
Do the facts in the case justify this description? Give reasons for your answer.  
What can you say of the chief characteristics of Jeremiah?  
Why would a man of his character manifest his emotions?  
Compare Jeremiah with Jesus and Paul in this respect.

### The Golden Text

How are people usually affected by the harvest season?  
Why are there both gladness and a somber feeling at that time?  
In what way did Jeremiah express himself regarding the lost condition of his people?  
Why had they passed up the opportunities for salvation?  
What was to be their fate?  
What question would they ask in exile and why?

### A Lament over a Sinful People

How does the ministry of Jeremiah compare with other Old Testament prophetic ministries?  
Compare him with Paul in this respect.  
Why are the righteous so interested in the welfare of the thoughtless and unfaithful?  
What other feeling did Jeremiah exhibit regarding his people?  
What does the record say about them at the time of this lesson?

What is the basic reason behind such conduct?  
What is absolutely essential in doing God's will?  
How do you account for so much indifference in this respect?

### The Desperate State of Zion

What is the principal cause for man's terrible sinful state?  
What are some of the scriptural facts in this respect?  
Why couldn't the people of Jeremiah's day trust each other?  
What "positive" action were those people taking?  
What did they weary themselves in doing?  
What two things are said in the text regarding "deceit"?  
Why can't a morally corrupt person know God?  
How do the facts of the lesson fit into our day?

### God's Threatened Judgment

What was God's method of dealing with the people of our lesson?  
What did he mean by melting them?  
What over-all effect did the refining have on the people of Judah?  
What question did Habakkuk raise in this connection which is also a question with many of our day?  
What is the answer to this question?  
Why is it necessary for God to discipline his people?  
What does Paul teach regarding this same subject?  
What did the prophet predict that would happen to the country of Judah in general?  
What was his attitude toward the ruined condition?

## Lesson II—July 12, 1964

## THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

## Lesson Text

Jer. 18: 1-12

1 The word which came to Jer-e-mi'-ah from Je-ho'-vah, saying,

2 Arise, and go down to the pot-ter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.

3 Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he was making a work on the wheels.

4 And when the vessel that he made of the clay was marred in the hand of the potter he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.

5 Then the word of Je-ho'-vah came to me, saying,

6 O house of Is'-ra-el, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith Je-ho'-vah. Behold, as the clay in the pot-ter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Is'-ra-el.

7 At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy it;

8 If that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.

9 And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it;

10 If they do that which is evil in my sight, that they obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.

11 Now therefore, speak to the men of Ju'-dah, and to the inhabitants of Je-ru'-sa-lem, saying, Thus saith Je-ho'-vah: Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and amend your ways and your doings.

12 But they say, It is in vain; for we will walk after our own devices, and we will do every one after the stubbornness of his evil heart.

Golden Text.—*"For my people have forgotten me."* (Jer. 18: 15.)

Devotional Reading.—Jer. 18: 13-23.

## Daily Bible Headings

July 6. M.	God's promises Conditional (1 Chron. 28: 1-9)
July 7. T.....	Forsake God and Be Forsaken (2 Chron. 15: 1-7)
July 8.	W. God's Goodness and Severity (Rom. 11: 9-24)
July 9. T.....	Breaking of a Potter's Vessel (Psalm 2: 1-9)
July 10. F.....	Judah Like a Broken Bottle (Jer. 19: 1-13)
July 11. S.....	Work of the Potter (Lam. 4: 1-10)
July 12. S.....	Only Jehovah Dependable (Jer. 17: 1-11)

TIME.—About 600 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

Persons.—Jeremiah and the potter.

## Introduction

One of the greatest and most successful ways of teaching the truth is by means of effective illustrations; and there is no greater example of this than the public ministry of Jesus while he was here upon the earth. But he was not the only teacher who employed that method of getting his lessons into the minds and hearts of his hearers; practically every teacher of note, in both the Old and New Testaments, used the same *system*. But Christ has an ad-

vantage as a teacher which no other teacher ever had, at least not as effective: he both taught by example and is the example for every person to follow, who wants to go home to God. "For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps." (1 Pet. 2: 21.)

When one teaches by example, he not only speaks the truth; he also enables those who are listening to

see the truth acted out. Who does not remember how Hosea, by his own tragic marital experience, showed the meaning of God's love for his people, while they were unfaithful to him? John says, "Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (1 John 3: 16.) Jesus not only taught that men should make personal sacrifices for others; he gave his own life, not only for his friends, but for his enemies as well. (Cf. Rom. 5: 6-8.) It is not possible to give a greater demonstration of one's love for others.

Madam Swetchine says that "there is a transcendent power in example. We reform others unconsciously, when we walk uprightly," while Al-

bert Einstein avers, "I am absolutely convinced that no wealth in the world can help humanity forward, even in the hand of the most devoted worker in this cause. The example of great and pure individuals is the only thing that can lead us to noble thoughts and deeds. Money only appeals to selfishness and irresistibly invites abuse. Can anyone imagine Moses, Christ, or Gandhi armed with the moneybags of Carnegie?" According to Goldsmith, "People seldom improve when they have no model but themselves to copy after," and Seneca notes that "noble examples stir us to noble actions, and the very history of large and public souls inspires a man with generous thoughts."

### The Golden Text

*"For my people have forgotten me."*

The idea which is stressed in the words of the golden text is that of the unnaturalness of Israel's sin, as manifested in forgetting her greatest benefactor; and this was illustrated by that which they could see and understand. "Therefore thus saith Jehovah: Ask ye now among the nations, who hath heard such things; the virgin of Israel hath done a very horrible thing. Shall the snow of Lebanon fail from the rock of the field? or shall the cold waters that flow down from afar be dried up? For my people have forgotten me, they have burned incense to false gods; and they have been made to stumble in their ways, in the ancient paths, to walk in bypaths, in a way not cast up; to make their land an astonishment, and a perpetual hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and shake his head." (Jer. 18: 13-16.)

It has been the tendency of our fallen race, all through the ages, to forget that which they should remember; and it was for this cause that Jehovah frequently required that memorials be erected to aid his people in overcoming this unfortunate inclination. (Read Josh. 4: 19-24.) There is in the vivid Old Testament narrative just referred to a sorry commentary on human frailty—our proneness to forget that which we ought to remember. How could the children of Israel ever forget their passage through the Jordan on

dry land? but they did! How could their fathers forget their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, their passage through the Red sea, or the beneficence of their Deliverer? but they did! How can enlightened people forget Jesus Christ, his coming into the world to redeem sinful humanity, and his sacrifice upon the cross? But they do! Monuments, memorials, reminders, celebrations—all have their warrant in the melancholy fact that we are a forgetful people. God has always encouraged the use of reminders, that is, the ones which he approved; and some of them may be described as *magnificent reminders*.

In speaking of the Lord's supper, Hall L. Calhoun said that Jesus wanted to be remembered by his followers. He wanted them to remember that he loved them well enough to have his body broken and his blood shed for them; and he counted on his love for them to bring about a corresponding love on their part for him. It is this consideration that really gives value and significance to the Lord's supper. It proclaims in action that those partaking of it do believe that Jesus died for them; and they therefore become witnesses to others of their faith in Jesus as their crucified Saviour and Lord. And inasmuch as the testimony of two is stronger than one, so the testimony of the entire church on earth becomes the testi-

mony of a great cloud of witnesses, the strength of which will, if the church is true to its trust, have a profound effect upon the world about

it. How then can Christians conduct themselves in such a way, as to cause the Lord to say of them, "My people have forgotten me?"

## The Text Explained

### A Visit to the Potter's House

(Jer. 18: 1-4)

*The word which came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he was making a work on the wheels. And when the vessel that he made of the clay was marred in the hand of the potter, he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.*

The lesson which Jeremiah sets forth in the text for today has been described as "the classical illustration of the divine sovereignty," and it is "the fitting emblem for the highest conception man can form of the divine sovereignty in relation to human freedom." The work of the potter was common among the Israelites. We are told that the clay was dug from the field, and then trodden by the feet of laborers until it became a workable paste, ready for the hand of the potter. The tools with which he worked were few and simple; but he was able to produce articles which were both useful and beautiful. It was to the house of the potter that Jeremiah was sent, not to preach a sermon, but to prepare one; not to speak the word of the Lord, but to hear it.

Some of the great lessons of life are those which one gains from the experience of others. If he will go where life is lived, he will have a practical basis for the lessons which he can apply to himself and teach to others; but if he is content to live apart from the common walks of life, the best he can do is to think and teach theoretically. Those who are acquainted with the work of Jeremiah are aware of the fact that he was constantly dealing with a rebellious people, a people who refused to be made into the kind of nation which the Lord desired for them; but that did not necessarily mean that they could not be redeemed and still be useful to the

Lord. The attitude of the people of Judah would naturally be depressing to Jeremiah, but when he followed Jehovah's instruction and went to the potter's house, he saw something which scattered his gloom and gave him a message of hope. When a vessel was marred in the potter's hand, he was able to take the same clay and mold it into something else, and that which was finally made would be as if the marred vessel had not existed.

The raw material with which the potter works is clay, and whatever he makes, clay is substance out of which it is made. When the clay lies before him, it has the possibilities of becoming an object of usefulness or beauty, once it has been subjected to the hand and skill of the potter. Our lives possess a similar capacity. There are possibilities in all of us which are capable of being realized, if we are but willing to place our lives in the hands of the Potter. But there is another similarity between clay and our lives, namely, both are subject to effects which can be produced upon them by causes from without. And if because of these outside influences the clay or the human being fails to respond to the touch of the designer, the result will be a marred vessel. However, both the skillful potter and the great Designer are capable of doing something to redeem that unfortunate situation; but it is, of course, essential that the human being respond to the Designer's touch. "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." (Rom. 8: 28.)

When the potter could not make that which he had originally planned to make, he did the next best; he made another vessel. How often has the heavenly Father had to work on that principle with his people! Jacob was remade, so to speak; and when he finally came from the great Potter's hand he was no longer the supplanter, but the honored father of a great nation. (Cf. Jesus and Peter,

John 1: 42; and Paul and John Mark, Acts 13: 13; 15: 36-40; 2 Tim. 4: 11.) This is not to suggest that either the potter or the Lord was or is pleased to do the work over, or that the second vessel is better than the first; but it does imply that if those who fail the first time will put themselves in the hand of God, he can still make them into vessels which can serve his purpose acceptably.

John Ruskin, so the story goes, called on a literary collaborator and found her in mental distress. She owned a costly handkerchief which had been ruined by a blot of ink. "Nothing can be done with it," she cried; "it is absolutely worthless!" "Are you sure?" replied Ruskin. "Let me have it awhile." A little later the handkerchief came back by mail, and his friend could scarcely recognize it. Ruskin, with the skill of an artist, had used the blot as a basis, and had made a design in India ink of surpassing beauty. It was then many times more valuable than in its original loveliness. What we think are fatal blots of life can often be made the foundation stones, the decisive markers, of a life of usefulness.

### **"Thou Art the Potter; I Am the Clay"**

(Jer. 18: 5-10)

*Then the word of Jehovah came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith Jehovah. Behold, as the clay in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy it; if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it: if they do that which is evil in my sight, that they obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.*

The absolute Sovereignty of God is a teaching of the Bible which most people shrink from; they much prefer that which is said regarding the Fatherhood of God. But when all the facts regarding that which the Bible says about God are brought into fo-

cus, it will be seen that there is no estrangement between the Sovereignty of God and his Fatherhood. When people recognize and respect God's Sovereignty, they are assured of the blessings of his Fatherhood; and those who seek the blessings of his Fatherhood without recognizing and respecting his Sovereignty, can never come into possession of the blessings which they long for. The Sovereignty of God simply means that he is supreme in all the relation of the universe, and that all creation, including the human race, is subject to his will. And anyone who does not recognize and respect this truth is certain to suffer for his folly in the end.

It is true that God had granted to man the freedom of choice, but that only makes man responsible for his conduct. If man were not allowed to exercise his own will power, then God himself would be responsible for all that man does. God's absolute power over man is discussed at length by Paul in his Roman letter. "Thou wilt say unto me, Why doth he still find fault? For who withstandeth his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed to say to him that formed it, Why didst thou make me thus? Or hath not a potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he also called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles." (Rom. 9: 19-24.)

Paul's purpose, in brief, in the passage just quoted was to show God's absolute power over all people, and to vindicate the righteousness of his course in accepting the believing Gentiles, while rejecting the unbelieving Jews, notwithstanding the fact that the latter had been his chosen people all through the age of Moses. God's total aim is to bring about a state of righteousness in his realm, and he, accordingly, deals with all mankind, both as individuals and nations, with a view to that end.

If individuals and nations obey him, he blesses them; but if they reject him, he will both reject and punish them. Both the individual and the nation are in the hands of God, and since he is a Sovereign Being, he has both the right and the ability to deal with them according to the standards of his own righteousness.

One of the clearest illustrations of this truth is found in God's method of dealing with Pharaoh and the Egyptians. "And Jehovah said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. For I will this time send all my plagues upon thy heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know there is none like me in all the earth. For now I had put forth my hand, and smitten thee and thy people with pestilence, and thou hadst been cut off from the earth: but in very deed for this cause have I made thee to stand, to show thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." (Ex. 9: 13-16.)

Jehovah sent Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, with a message to let the Israelites go out of his country, and serve their God. But Pharaoh was unwilling to comply with the command. God then sent a series of plagues to demonstrate his power, and to make the Egyptian monarch realize that he was dealing with a God who was superior to the Pharaoh. It was in the midst of the plagues that Jehovah, through Moses, explained to Pharaoh why the latter had not already been killed. God wanted to make him stand up as a public example of what will happen to those who sin against him. It should be kept clearly in mind that Jehovah did not cause Pharaoh to sin, or raise him up to do evil before him; but having already been guilty of daring wickedness against both God and his people, he now became a monument to the power of God to thwart, disappoint, wreck, and utterly destroy those who are in rebellion against him.

This incident plainly shows that Jehovah sometimes causes very wicked men to stand in places of honor and power among men, permits

them to continue for a long time, and suffers them to grow insufferably insolent, that his glory may appear all the brighter in their destruction. And if Christians cannot counteract their wicked influence in a scriptural manner, they had better leave the matter in the hands of God. (Cf. Dan. 4: 17; 1 Sam. 26: 6-12.) God told the nation of Israel, through Jeremiah, that they were in his hands, just as the clay was in the hands of the potter; and that he would deal with them according to their conduct. If he promised to punish them for their evil conduct and they turned to him, he would bless them instead; but if he promised to bless them because of their righteousness and they turned to evil, then he would curse them instead.

When the term "repent" is used with reference to God, we are not to understand that he repents in the sense that man does. (Cf. 1 Sam. 15: 29.) The use of such language is called *anthropomorphism*, that is, the ascription of human attributes to God. The use of anthropomorphic language is our highest and best method of expression concerning God. Just as we adapt ourselves to the conceptions of a child in an effort to get him to understand us, so the Bible employs anthropomorphic language when it becomes necessary to bridge the great chasm between the Infinite and the finite minds.

### The Divine Application and the Human Response

(Jer. 18: 11, 12)

*Now therefore, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith Jehovah: Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and amend your ways and your doings. But they say, It is in vain; for we will walk after our own devices, and we will do every one after the stubbornness of his evil heart.*

Verse 11 appears to set forth Jehovah's application of his position as the Potter, while verse 12 gives Judah's response. God had, in the previous section of the lesson text, told the people that they were in his hands, just as the clay was in the

hands of the potter, and that he would deal with them according to their moral and spiritual condition. And in the verse now before us, he tells them that since they are evil, he will devise evil against them; and he calls upon them to repent. If they would "return ye now every one from his evil way, and amend your ways and your doing," he would be able to bless them; but if not, punishment would be sure to follow.

It is difficult for us to see how they could be so rebellious to the divine plea; but if we will only look at ourselves, it will not be so difficult to understand. God pled with his people in every conceivable way, but largely to no avail. (Cf. 2 Kings 17: 7-18; Isa. 30: 8-14; Jer. 2: 20-25.) People, as a rule, do not openly state that they are not going to serve the Lord, and follow in the way which he has ordained for them; but their

actions demonstrate their feeling, (in his final letter to Timothy, Paul said to that gospel preacher, and through him to all of us, "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." (2 Tim. 4: 1-5.) It is as difficult to get some professed followers of Christ to walk in his ways, as it was in the days of Jeremiah and other Old Testament prophets.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

Why is teaching by means of example so effective?

Discuss this method of teaching as used by various teachers of the Bible.

What testimony have men contributed to this general truth?

What has been your own experience with reference to this method of teaching?

### The Golden Text

What condition is manifested when people forget their benefactors?

Why did the people of the Lord forget him so easily during Old Testament times?

Has the situation changed today? Give reasons for your answer.

What provisions has the Lord made to aid people in overcoming the sin of forgetfulness?

What are some of the New Testament reminders for God's people today?

### A Visit to the Potter's House

What great truth is illustrated here by the lesson text?

Why was the potter and his work such an effective illustration for the people of Judah?

Discuss the general work of a potter.

Why was Jeremiah sent to the potter's house?

Where do we learn some of the great lessons of life?

What effect did the visit to the potter's house apparently have on Jeremiah?

What could the potter do when a vessel marred in his hand?

Discuss the similarities between the raw material which the potter used and our lives.

What encouragement should we derive from the skill of the great Designer?

Give some examples of the Lord's work in reshaping the lives of people who failed at first.

### "Thou Art the Potter; I Am the Clay"

Why do people so often shrink from the Bible teaching regarding the Sovereignty of God?

What is the relation between the Sovereignty of God and his Fatherhood?

What is meant by the Sovereignty of God?

What is the relationship of man's freedom of choice and the Sovereignty of God?

What lesson did Paul draw from these great truths?

What is God's total aim in dealing with people?

What effect does this have in his dealings with them?

How is the truth of God's Sovereignty illustrated in the life and attitude of Pharaoh?

Why wasn't Pharaoh killed when he first resisted God's will?

What should be our attitude toward such things today?

What application did God make of this principle with reference to Israel?

In what sense does God repent?

What important lessons should we learn from this section of the lesson text?

### The Divine Application and the Human Response

What application did God make in this section of the lesson text?

Why would he devise evil against his people?

Why did he call upon them to repent?

What was the response of the people to the exhortation?

Why are people so unresponsive to the plea of God for them to return to him?

What was the history of Israel in this respect all through the years?

How does human nature today compare with that of Old Testament times?



# Lesson III—July 19, 1964

## JEREMIAH CONDEMNS FALSE PROPHETS

### Lesson Text

Jer. 23: 1-4, 13-18, 25-32

1 Woe unto the shepherds that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith Je-ho'-vah.

2 Therefore thus saith Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el, against the shepherds that feed my people: Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them; behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith Je-ho'-vah.

3 And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and multiply.

4 And I will set up shepherds over them, who shall feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be lacking, saith Je-ho'-vah.

13 And I have seen folly in the prophets of Sa-ma'-ri-a; they prophesied by Ba'-al, and caused my people Is'-ra-el to err

14 In the prophets of Je-ru'-sa-lem also I have seen a horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies; and they strengthen the hands of evil-doers, so that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them become unto me as Sod'-om, and the inhabitants thereof as Go-mor'-rah.

15 Therefore thus saith Je-ho'-vah of hosts concerning the prophets: Behold, I will feed them with worm-wood, and make them drink the water of gall; for from the prophets of Je-ru'-sa-lem is ungodliness gone forth into all the land.

16 Thus saith Je-ho'-vah of hosts, Harken 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 Je-ho'-vah.

17 They say continually unto them that despise me, Je-ho'-vah hath said, Ye shall have peace; and unto every one that walketh in the stubbornness of his own heart they say, No evil shall come upon you.

18 For who hath stood in the council of Je-ho'-vah, that he should perceive and hear his word? who hath marked my word, and heard it?

. . . . .

25 I have heard what the prophets have said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed.

26 How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies, even the prophets of the deceit of their own heart?

27 That think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbor, as their fathers forgat my name for Ba'-al.

28 The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the straw to the wheat? saith Je-ho'-v5h.

29 Is not my word like fire? saith Je-ho'-vah; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?

30 Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith Je-ho'-vah, that steal my words every one from his neighbor.

31 Behold, I am against the prophets, saith Je-ho'-vah, that use their tongues, and say, He saith.

32 Behold, I am against them that prophesy lying dreams, saith Je-ho'-vah, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their vain boasting; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them; neither do they profit this people at all, saith Je-ho'-vah.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Behold, I am against the prophets, saith Jehovah, that use their tongues, and say, He saith"* (Jer. 23: 31.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Jer. 23: 5-8.

### Daily Bible Readings

July 13. M.....Prophecy in the Days of Moses (Num. 12: 24-35)  
 July 14. T.....Prophets Prophesy Lies (Jer. 14: 13-18)

July 15.	W. Prophets Who Deal Falsely (Jer. 6: 1-13)
July 16. T.....	Profane Prophets and Priests (Jer. 23: 1-11)
July 17. F.....	We Must Try the Spirits (1 John 4: 1-6)
July 18. S.....	Apostasy in the Last Days (1 Tim. 4: 1-16)
July 19. S.....	Sure Word of Prophecy (2 Pet. 1: 1-19)

TIME.—About 599 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jeremiah and the people of Judah.

## Introduction

The teaching of God's word to others is one of the great responsibilities which every normal follower of the Lord must bear. No accountable person can escape this responsibility. Every individual who knows enough about the Lord to obey him, can and should tell others about him. When the early church was scattered abroad from Jerusalem, the implication is that they all became teachers of the word. "They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word." (Acts 8: 4.) The obligation to teach rests upon every responsible follower of the Lord for at least two reasons, namely, (1) because it is the Lord's will, and (2) because anyone who enjoys salvation should want to see others saved. The writer of Hebrews says, "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." (Heb. 5: 12.)

While it is true that every person who is in covenant relationship with the Lord is expected to teach others to the best of his ability, it is also true that the Lord has, all through the ages, had people in his service whose special duty it was to teach his will to those who should know it. Under the law of Moses, for example, the priests were expected to give spiritual food or instruction to the people, while the prophets were expected to deliver any special message which the Lord regarded as necessary for the times. When the church of the New Testament was established, teaching became the center of all activities. "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers." (Acts 2: 42.)

A teaching ministry is absolutely essential to the success of the work

which God has ordained for his people. "And he gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ: till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error; but speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ; from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love." (Eph. 4: 11-16.)

But not all people who professed to serve the Lord have been faithful to their trust with respect to teaching. The following paragraphs from Ezekiel will give some idea of the conditions as they often existed in Israel. "And the word of Jehovah came unto me saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, even to the shepherds, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Woe unto the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the sheep? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill the failings; but ye feed not the sheep. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought back that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with rigor have ye ruled over them. And they were

scattered, because there was no shepherd; and they became food to all the beasts of the field, and were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my sheep were scattered upon all the face of the earth; and there was none that did search or seek after them.

"Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of Jehovah: As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, surely forasmuch as my sheep became a prey, and my sheep became food to all the beasts of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my sheep, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my sheep; therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of Jehovah: Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my sheep at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the sheep; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; and I will deliver my sheep from their mouth, that they may not be food for them." (Ezek. 34: 1-10.)

But false teachers were not limited to the Old Testament period. Peter warned against such in the

Christian era. "But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers, who shall privily bring in destructive heresies, denying even the Master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their lascivious doings; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And in covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose sentence now from of old lingereth not, and their destruction slumbereth not." (2 Pet. 2: 1-3.) Jesus himself warned of false teachers, when he said, "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? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them." (Matt. 7: 15-20.)

## The Golden Text

This portion of the lesson is found in the main text and will be considered in its regular order.

## The Text Explained

A Terrible Warning and a Gracious Promise  
(Jer. 23:1-4)

*Woe unto the shepherds that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith Jehovah. Therefore thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, against the shepherds that feed my people: Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them; behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith Jehovah.*

The "shepherds" in the passage just quoted apparently refer to the kings, princes, priests, prophets, and all who were responsible for teaching and leading the people of Judah. The preceding paragraph has primary reference to the king, and it reads as follows: "As I live, saith Jehovah, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon

my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence; and I would give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and into the hand of them of whom thou art afraid, even into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans. And I will cast thee out, and they mother that bear thee, into another country, where ye were not born; and there shall ye die. But to the land whereunto their soul longeth to return, thither shall they not return. Is this man Coniah a despised broken vessel? is he a vessel wherein none delighteth? wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into the land which they know not? O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of Jehovah. Thus saith Jehovah, Write this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days; for no more shall a man of his seed prosper, sitting upon the

throne of David, and ruling in Judah." (Jer. 22: 24-30.)

Coniah, also known as Jeconiah (Jer. 24: 1) and Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24: 6, 8), was the last king in the line of David to reign upon the letter's throne. It is true that Zedekiah reigned later, but he was Coniah's uncle rather than his son; and was not therefore as far removed from David in the line of kings, as was Coniah. The importance of the passage just quoted is seen in the fact that it marks the end of the kingdom of Judah, so far as an independent nation was concerned. Zedekiah was made king by Nebuchadnezzar (called Nebuchadrezzar by Jeremiah), and was his vassal throughout the eleven years of his reign. (See the 24th and 25th chapters of 2 Kings.) The terrible end of the kingdom of Judah was charged to the shepherds of the people, the kings, princes, priests, and prophets; and Jehovah held them responsible for their lack of shepherds' care.

*And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and multiply. And I will set up shepherds over them, who shall feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be lacking, saith Jehovah.*

While the reference here is probably primarily to the return of the Jews from the Babylonian exile, it may also be extended to mean the kingdom of Christ. The justice of God drove the people into exile, but his mercy called them back. And since the shepherds had failed in their responsibility, they also are charged with driving the people away from their home. There may be some significance to the fact that only the people of Judah returned as a body from the captivity; but inasmuch as the people of the northern kingdom were in the realm which was ruled over by Cyrus, they no doubt had the opportunity of coming back as individuals. If there is any significance in the question just suggested, it would be in the fact that the returning pilgrims would constitute a single kingdom. This certainly would foreshadow the unity of the kingdom of Christ.

It should also be observed that just because the shepherds of Judah utterly failed in their mission, that did not mean the end to the need for and the appointment of other shepherds. Jehovah's gracious promise was, "And I will set up shepherds over them, who shall feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be lacking, saith Jehovah." This should be an impressive thought to those who have the oversight of the Lord's people in the church today. They will certainly have to answer for any failure on their part; but their failure will not mean the end of the work which God has ordained. Verses 5-8 of the chapter from which the lesson text is taken seem to confirm that which was just said regarding the inclusion of the kingdom of Christ in the prediction of the return of God's people from exile, and the appointment of more and better shepherds.

### **The Denunciation of the Lying Prophets of Samaria and Judah**

(Jer. 23: 13-18)

*And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied by Baal, and caused my people Israel to err. In the prophets of Jerusalem also I have seen a horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies; and they strengthen the hands of evil-doers, so that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them become unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah. Therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts concerning the prophets: Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall; for from the prophets of Jerusalem is ungodliness gone forth into all the land.*

Samaria was one of the principal cities, and sometimes the capital, of the northern kingdom. It was the seat of idolatry and the home of many of the prophets of Baal. Although both the city and the kingdom had been in ruins for a hundred years, the example of the false prophets was still used to illustrate the damage which can be done in that way. The people of the northern kingdom were away from Jerusalem and the influence of the temple, and it was therefore compara-

tively easy to lead the people astray and cause them to forget God; but it appears that the force of the comparison is seen in the fact that the prophets of Jerusalem, with their superior advantages, were worse than those of Samaria. Not only did they prophesy lies, but their moral lives were such as to strengthen the hand of those who were engaged in wickedness.

The prophets of the Old Testament times were comparable to the preachers of our day, with this difference: faithful prophets were usually inspired, while preachers are not. But preachers do have a great influence with the people. The moral life of preachers today is, on the whole, far above that of the prophets of Jerusalem; but it is a fact, capable of being demonstrated, that there are preachers today who strengthen the hands of people in matters which are contrary to the teaching of the New Testament; and with that kind of influence being brought to bear, it is very difficult to get some people to turn from their evil ways. That which has just been said is particularly true with respect to many practices which may properly be described as worldliness. Such preachers will receive their reward in God's own good time. There is a great contrast between the effects of the false prophesying and that of the apostles of Christ, as may be seen by reading Luke 24: 46, 47.

*Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, Harken 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. They say continually unto them that despise me, Jehovah hath said, Ye shall have peace; and unto every one that walketh in the stubbornness of his own heart they say, No evil shall come upon you. For who hath stood in the council of Jehovah, that he should perceive and hear his word? who hath marked my word, and heard it?*

This is a divine warning against listening to false prophets; and the same application is made to us today. Every person is responsible for that which he hears (cf. Mark 4: 24; John 12: 48-50), and if one will follow the instruction of Jesus in Matt.

7: 15-20, he will be able to determine whether or not a teacher is speaking the truth. (Cf. 1 John 4: 1-6; Acts 17: 10-12.) After warning against false prophets, Jesus says, "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.)

The term "iniquity," in the passage just quoted, describes, in the words of Thayer, "the condition of one without law—either because ignorant of it, or because violating it." This can be done by speaking that which one may think is right, rather than by speaking that which Christ has specifically authorized. For example, one may preach salvation in a way which the Lord did not authorize. He may say that salvation is by faith only, that is, faith without obedience to the gospel; but those who do so are preaching salvation without law, whether ignorance on their part or a deliberate violation of the teaching of the New Testament. Preachers may tell people that they can be saved out of the church, as well as they can in it; but no one has ever been authorized by the Lord to preach that. (Cf. Acts 2: 47; 4: 12; Eph. 1: 22, 23.) Preachers may tell people that baptism in water is not a condition of salvation, but they are not divinely authorized to teach that. (Cf. Mark 16: 15, 16; 2 Tim. 2: 10; Gal. 3: 26, 27; 1: 6-9.) Jesus has plainly told people what will happen, if they endeavor to serve him and teach others in an unauthorized manner—"And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

### The Lord's Attitude Toward

Self-Appointed Prophets

(Jer. 23: 25-32)

*I have heard what the prophets have said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that*

*prophesy lies, even the prophets of the deceit of their own heart? that think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbor, as their fathers forgat my name for Baal. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is straw to the wheat? saith Jehovah. Is not my word like a fire? saith Jehovah; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith Jehovah, that steal my words every one from his neighbor. Behold, I am against the prophets, saith Jehovah, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. Behold, I am against them that prophesy lying dreams, saith Jehovah, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their vain boasting: yet I sent them not, nor commanded them; neither do they profit this people at all, saith Jehovah.*

In the two verses of the paragraph which precede the section of the lesson text just quoted, Jehovah asks, "Am I a God at hand, saith Jehovah, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places so that I shall not see him, saith Jehovah. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith Jehovah." This is to say that God fully understands the hearts of all men who profess to teach his word, and no one therefore can deceive him. "For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do." (Heb. 4: 12, 13.)

Jehovah did make known his will to people in olden times by means of dreams, but those dreams did not contradict that which he had already said regarding himself and his will

for his people. If a prophet therefore claimed to have a dream which was inspired by the Lord, he should tell his dream, but should also speak the word of the Lord faithfully. In commenting on the passage now before us, Adam Clarke says, "In the Book of *Genesis* we find many examples; and although many mistook the workings of their own vain *imaginings* in sleep for *revelations* from God, yet he has often revealed himself in this way: but such dreams were easily distinguished from the others. They were always such as had no connection with the *gratification of the flesh*; they were such as contained *warnings against sin*, and *excitements to holiness*; they were always *consecutive—well connected* with a proper *beginning* and *ending*; such as possessed the *intellect* more than the *imagination*. Of such dreams the Lord says, (ver. 28:) *The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream*—permit him to show what he has thus received from the Lord: but let him tell it as a *dream*, and speak my word faithfully, lest he may have been deceived."

Wheat and chaff must be separated, and God's word burns like a fire, and breaks in pieces all that which should be destroyed. In other words, if God's word is faithfully spoken, God's will will be clearly revealed. There are too many preachers today who want to tell that which they think God's word means, without quoting that which he has plainly said. That kind of preaching does not profit the people at all. The divine command is, "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 word of an evangelist, fulfil thy ministry." (2 Tim. 4: 1-5.)

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

## Introduction

What responsibility is laid upon all the Lord's people for teaching his word?

Why are Christians obligated to tell others about the Lord and his will for them?  
 What special arrangement has the Lord always had for teaching?  
 Why is a teaching ministry essential to the success of the work which the Lord has ordained?  
 Why are so many people unfaithful to this trust?

#### A Terrible Warning and a Gracious Promise

Who were the shepherds mentioned in the lesson text now under consideration?  
 In what way did Jehovah show that the kingdom of Judah would come to an end?  
 What promise did he make regarding his scattered people?  
 In what way (of ways) was this promise realized?  
 What did God say about the shepherds whom he would raise up for his people?  
 What special lesson should we learn from this regarding leadership in the church today?

#### The Denunciation of the Lying Prophets of Samaria and Judah

Why were the prophets of Samaria mentioned in this connection?  
 What application does this section of our lesson text have for us?  
 In what ways can preachers strengthen the hands of evil-doers and keep them from repentance?  
 What obligation do people have regarding the teachers whom they hear?

How can they tell the difference between true and false teachers?  
 What lesson did Jesus give regarding those who will go to heaven?  
 What is the meaning of the term "iniquity," as used by Jesus in Matt. 7: 23?  
 Show how it is possible for preachers to be guilty of working iniquity?  
 Discuss several examples of this.

#### The Lord's Attitude toward Self-Appointed Prophets

How is it possible for the Lord to know the motives of all who profess to teach his word?  
 Why can't people be hidden from the Lord?  
 What does the New Testament teach regarding the power of his word?  
 Why was the subject of dreams introduced in the lesson text?  
 What use did God sometime make of dreams?  
 How could one know whether or not his dream was a revelation?  
 What was the one who had a dream told to do?  
 Why was he commanded to speak God's word faithfully?  
 What is the lesson of the "wheat and the chaff"?  
 In what way is God's word like a fire?  
 How is it like a hammer?  
 How may one always be sure that he is speaking the will of the Lord?  
 Why do some people seem to be afraid to read or quote that which the New Testament contains regarding one's duty to God?

## Lesson IV — July 26, 1964

### JEREMIAH'S TRIAL

#### Lesson Text

Jer. 26: 7-19

7 And the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jer-e-mi'-ah speaking these words in the house of Je-ho'-vah.

8 And it came to pass, when Jer-e-mi'-ah had made an end of speaking all that Je-ho'-vah had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold on him, saying, Thou shalt surely die.

9 Why hast thou prophesied in the name of Je-ho'-vah, saying, This house shall be like Shi'-loh, and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant? And all the people were gathered unto Jer-e-mi'-ah in the house of Je-ho'-vah.

10 And when the princes of Ju'-dah heard these things, they came up from the king's house unto the house of Je-ho'-vah; and they sat in the entry of the new gate of Je-ho'-vah's house.

11 Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy of death; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears.

12 Then spake Jer-e-mi'-ah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, Je-ho'-vah sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard.

13 Now therefore amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of Je-ho'-vah your God and Je-ho'-vah will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.

14 But as for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as is good and right in your eyes.

15 Only know ye for certain that, if ye put me to death, ye will bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhab-

itants thereof; for of a truth Je-ho'-vah hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.

16 Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets: This man is not worthy of death; for he hath spoken to us in the name of Je-ho'-vah our God.

17 Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying,

18 Mi'-cah the Mó'-rash-tite prophesied in the days of Hez-e-ki'-ah king of Ju'-dah; and he spake to all

the people of Ju'-dah, saying, Thus saith Je-ho'-vah of hosts: Zi-on shall be plowed as a field, and Je-ru'-sa-16m shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest.

19 Did Hez-e-ki'-ah king of Ju'-dah and all Ju'-dah put him to death? did he not fear Je-ho'-vah, and entreat the favor of Je-ho'-vah, and Je-ho'-vah repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus should we commit great evil against our own souls.

Golden Text.—*"Jehovah sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard."* (Jer. 26: 12.)

Devotional Reading.—Jer. 26: 1-6.

### Daily Bible Readings

July 20. M.....	Lord Is with the Faithful (Psalm 37: 3-40)
July 21. T.....	Jehovah Is Over His People (Psalm 125: 1-5)
July 22. W.....	God a Rock of Refuge (Psalm 94: 12-23)
July 23. T.....	A Place of Refuge (Isa. 4: 1-6)
July 24. F.....	Refuge Under His Wings (Psalm 57: 1-5)
July 25. S.....	God a Glorious Sanctuary (Ezek. 11: 14-21)
July 26. S.....	A Plot Against Jeremiah (Jer. 26: 16-24)

TIME.—About 609 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jeremiah, priests, prophets, princes, and elders.

### Introduction

The character of Jeremiah may be described as gentle and trustful, and if one reads the account of his times, he will have no difficulty in seeing that he was no match for the secret treachery and open violence which he frequently encountered. That is, he was no match for such opposition, so far as his own strength was concerned. But Jeremiah was not alone, and all through his long ministry of forty years (626-586 B. C.) he faced his foes with courage which triumphs over the natural man, rebuked his people with relentless severity, and contradicted their dearest prejudices. There is no wrath so terrible as the "wrath of the Lamb," and Jeremiah's wrath was like that. In commenting on the character of Jeremiah, M. Kaufmann says:

"The characteristic features of Jeremiah's individuality are a passionate intensity and stern veracity mingled with pathetic, almost feminine, tenderness, a capacity for indignant invective, with occasional fits of diffidence and self-distrust which make him, as a 'human document,' one of the most engaging figures in

history. In the 'confession of Jeremiah' and the memorials of his life contained in his own writings, supplemented by his friend and faithful disciple Baruch, we have, as Professor Cheyne says, a most 'fascinating psychical problem.' Gentle in his general bearing, he becomes at times vehement when harassed by open and secret dangers; as a young man disillusionized at his birthplace Anathoth, the city of priests, by the sight of priestly corruption, later on arriving at Jerusalem, like Luther at Rome, he is struck with horror by worse sins perpetrated at the sacred shrine, the center of piety, at the very threshold of the Holy of Holies; in the further course of his restless career a natural disposition to pessimistic views gathers strength. He is 'the man that hath seen affliction.' But his pessimism never becomes that of rage and resentment, as in Schopenhauer; it is modified by the religious sense of dutiful resignation to the Divine will. His feeling of utter loneliness in the crowd of unsympathetic countrymen saddens his soul, and with the quick sensibility of a refined mind he



shrinks from contact with the crimes and sins he witnesses in the city, in the court, in the sanctuary. What he sees and suffers, however, does not produce a sour misanthropy. Unlike Schopenhauer, he does not dwell with savage delight on the depraved worthlessness and abject meanness of his fellow-men. His enemies furnish him with sufficient ground for scorn and distrust, and the depressing influences of his environment produce occasional doubts and misgivings as to his own mission in those strange words: 'Wilt thou indeed be unto me a deceitful *brook*, as waters that be not sure?' (15: 18, R. V., margin). But from such temporary attacks of sceptical pessimism he recovers quickly and listens to the reassuring voice, which bids him stand forth as a 'brazen wall' against all opposition and assures him of Divine support."

Looking at Jeremiah from the Christian point of view, we would like to think that he always endured his persecution with meekness, patience, and forgiveness; but as we think of him in his day, it is not surprising to hear him bemoan his hard lot, or even curse the day of his birth. (Cf. Job 3: 1ff.) Many a Christian man's faith has failed him, and in moments of despair he has wished that he had never been born. Therefore, when Jeremiah challenged the justice of God's government, or even complained that he had been deceived and deluded, we can sympathize with the human despair and weariness which caused him, for the moment, to lose his hold on God, and sink exhausted and hopeless. But when we hear him utter bitter curses against his persecutors, and passionately implore God's vengeance upon them, we are startled and horror-struck. (Read Jer. 18: 19-23.) While it is true that

some personal vindictiveness was mingled with these imprecations, we may be sure that there was a far deeper meaning in them. However imperfect may have been the prophet's way of phrasing his feelings, his words just referred to are an expression of his desire for the triumph of righteousness, for the manifestation of God's way in the world. We must remember how keenly Jeremiah felt that his cause was God's cause, and that his enemies were God's enemies; that God's honor was at stake to defend and vindicate his prophet, and at the same time prove that his opponents were utterly in the wrong. In the words of J. Brierley,

"However they phrased it, what the early Evangelicals meant by 'the wrath of God' was the plain, incontestable fact that the universe turns a very ugly face towards sin, towards wrong being and wrong doing. The state of things brought always the worst consequences, now and always. To get a man out of that was worth some strong language. When a man is in a wrong and dangerous position, a thorough shaking up, even by wholesome terror, may be the best thing for him. He will do things then that surprise himself. Tell a man who says he cannot move a step farther that within six yards of him lies a mine of dynamite that will explode in five minutes and he will run like a deer. Well that he can! There is a moral condition, that of millions to-day, where nothing but a good fright will rouse. And if you put 'hell and damnation' for all that system of things which punishes guilt and the abandonment of the good, are the words too strong? It is hell and damnation, and those early Evangelicals knew it and said it. And the medicine gripped and worked."

## The Golden Text

This portion of the lesson is found in the principal text, and it will be dealt with in its regular order.

## The Text Explained

The Reaction to Jeremiah's Preaching

(Jer. 26: 7-9)

*And the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of Jehovah.* Jeremiah was Jehovah's prophet, and he was speaking Jehovah's message in Jehovah's house, all

of which showed courage and devotion on his part; and it was reasonable for him to trust in Jehovah's overruling providence with respect to the outcome, although the prophet, as has already been observed, sometimes wavered in his faith in Jehovah. The work of a prophet in Old

Testament days was comparable to that of a gospel preacher today; and we may be sure that the same principles which applied to the prophets of those days are also applicable to us now, as may be seen by reading the following two paragraphs.

"In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiaquim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, came this word from Jehovah, saying, Thus saith Jehovah: Stand in the court of Jehovah's house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in Jehovah's house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them: diminish not a word. It may be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way; that I may repent me of the evil which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings. And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith Jehovah: If ye will not hearken to me, to walk in my law, which I have set before you, to hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I send unto you, even rising up early and sending them, but ye have not hearkened; then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth." (Jer. 26: 1-6; cf. 1 Sam. 4: 10-12, 22.)

"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." (2 Tim. 4: 1-5.) There is no substitute for the preaching of the plain, simple, and unadulterated word of God. "For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do." (Heb. 4: 12, 13.)

*And it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that Jehovah had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold on him, saying, Thou shalt surely die. Why hast thou prophesied in the name of Jehovah, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant? And all the people were gathered unto Jeremiah in the house of Jehovah.*

There is no indication that any in the audience who heard Jeremiah's words on the occasion now under consideration interrupted his address: they apparently allowed him to finish that which he had to say; but it is certain that the people for whom the words were intended had no sympathy for them. When people are bent on having their own way, the word of the Lord has no interest for them. This has been the sad story throughout the entire history of God's dealings with the human race. "And Jesus answered and spake again in parables unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king, who made a marriage feast for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the marriage feast: and they would not come. Again he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them that are bidden, Behold, I have made ready my dinner; my oxen and my failings are killed, and all things are ready: come to the marriage feast. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his merchandise; and the rest laid hold on his servants, and treated them shamefully, and killed them." (Matt. 22: 1-6.)

When any one claims to be speaking the word of the Lord, the least that those to whom the message is addressed should do is to listen respectfully; and then search the scriptures and make an effort to see whether or not that which is said is in harmony with God's revealed will. When Paul and his companions tried to tell the people in Thessalonica about Jesus and his plan for their salvation, "the Jews, being moved with jealousy, took unto them certain vile fellows of the rabble, and gathering a crowd, set the city in an uproar." This resulted in the imme-

diate departure of Paul and Silas from the city, and their next stop was in Beroea, where they entered into the synagogue of the Jews. "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." (Read Acts 17: 1-12.)

Any person with reasonable intelligence can easily determine whether or not that which is preached is the word of the Lord, but alas! how few make the effort. A gospel preacher may quote Mark 16: 15, 16; Acts 2: 37-39; and similar passages, but the majority of religious people today will register their opposition to such preaching. But that is not all. There are people today who are in the church of the New Testament who are opposed to some scriptures which apply to them, as the denominational world is to the ones just cited; and any one who has had any experience at all, or who has made any observation, knows that scores of gospel preachers are forced to move on because they dared to proclaim the whole truth regarding Christian living.

#### The Charge against and the Defense of Jeremiah (Jer. 26: 10-15)

*And when the princes of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king's house unto the house of Jehovah; and they sat in the entry of the new gate of Jehovah's house. Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy of death; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears. Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, Jehovah sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard. Now therefore amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of Jehovah your God; and Jehovah will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you. But as for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as is good and right in your eyes. Only know ye for certain that, if ye put me to death, ye*

*will bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth Jehovah hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.*

The princes who came to the house of Jehovah from the king's house were the judges before whom Jeremiah's trial was conducted. It is very probable that they were not in full sympathy with the prophet, but they did, as we shall see further on, possess a sense of fairness and justice. The charge which the priests and prophets placed against Jeremiah was that he had prophesied against the city, and there was no question about the accuracy of the charge; for the prophet freely admitted as much. But, as God's servants usually do, Jeremiah made it plain that his purpose was to do them good, to turn God's wrath away from them. His sole defense was that God had commanded him to deliver the message. He then placed himself at the mercy of his judges, but warned them of the consequences which would come upon them, if they put him to death.

Those who are familiar with the life of Paul are aware of the fact that when he was brought to trial for preaching the gospel he seldom, if ever, defended himself personally. Instead, he usually wound up by preaching a gospel sermon to his opponents. When teachers are sure that they are obeying God in proclaiming their message, they have a moral stamina which cannot be overthrown. The defense which Jeremiah made may be regarded as one of the great pivotal moments in man's fight for freedom. Just as Joshua stood before the tribes of Israel, Paul before Agrippa, Socrates before the Athenians, and Luther before the Diet at Worms, so Jeremiah stood before his accusers in Jerusalem.

It is worthy of notice that Jeremiah did not make any counter charges against his opponents. He boldly called upon them to amend their ways, but he made it plain that that was both for their own good and for the glory of God. People may sometimes wonder why the Lord permits his people to suffer for doing that which he commands them to do; but if they will only stop and think, they will be able to see that sometimes such is necessary in order to allow the opponents of the truth to make out

their own case. People will face the Lord in judgment at the last day who would hotly deny that they would have said and done certain things, had they been kept from saying and doing them; but having said and done them, they cannot deny the fact and will be dealt with accordingly. It is doubtless for this reason, along with others, that good people are often persecuted; they are simply the victims of evil-minded people who are allowed to have their own way, and who will reap that which they sowed when the great harvest time comes. It is never God's will to work evil toward his people, and that is another reason why he sends his prophets and preachers to those who are in rebellion against him. If they will only turn back to him, he will forgive them and treat them as if they had never sinned.

### The Verdict Regarding Jeremiah and Some Supporting Evidence

(Jer. 26: 16-19)

*Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets: This man is not worthy of death; for he hath spoken to us in the name of Jehovah our God. Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying, Micah the Morastite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah; and he spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Zion shall be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest. Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him to death? did he not fear Jehovah, and entreat the favor of Jehovah, and Jehovah repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus should we commit great evil against our own souls.*

Regardless of how the princes felt toward Jeremiah personally, they certainly saw that the prophet was only doing that which Jehovah had commanded him to do; and he was therefore not a criminal who should be put to death. The concluding paragraph of the chapter from which the lesson text is taken, verses 20-24, tells of another prophet who prophesied in the name of Jehovah "against this city and against this land according to all the words of Jeremiah," who

incurred the wrath of the king. "And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men, and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death; but when Uriah heard it, he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt." Jehoiakim, however, sent to Egypt and had the prophet brought back to Jerusalem, and "slew him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people."

We are not told why Uriah was put to death and Jeremiah spared, while prophesying the same thing; but there may be a clue in the closing verse of the chapter: "But the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death." Ahikam was a trusted servant in the reign of Josiah (cf. 2 Kings 22: 12-14), and it is altogether possible that he still exercised great influence among the princes during the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah. At any rate, it was through the influence of Ahikam that Jeremiah escaped death at the time of the lesson now before us. This, however, was doubtless in keeping with God's providential designs; for he must have had other work for the prophet to do.

The argument of the elders regarding the prophecy of Micah was both logical and effective. Micah was contemporary with Isaiah, and he uttered his prophecy about one hundred years before the days of Jeremiah. The prophet's words are found in Mic. 3: 12. Jeremiah seldom uttered a warning against his people, without at the same time showing them how the impending danger could be averted; and with this fact before them, along with the example of Hezekiah's response to Micah's prediction, there was every reason why they should not put Jeremiah to death. Genuine repentance is the certain way to God's mercy. When the path of repentance is once entered, as some one has observed, the sinner is surprised to find how easy and pleasant it is. He perhaps thought that it was a perilous ascent to where the storm-winds raged unceasingly; a sharp, cruel road strewn with branching thorns, and filled with stones like knives; a painful progress with bleeding feet and toiling breath. Instead, he finds it a calm and peace-

ful way. Luther confessed to Staupitz that the word repentance, which he formerly thought the most terrifying word in the Bible, was now the

most gracious. And Bengel says, "Repentance is a joyful gift." The waters of Marah have been sweetened by the tree of healing. (Read Ex. 15: 22-26.)

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Tell something of the character of Jeremiah.  
How can we account for his success in the face of great opposition?  
What were some of the characteristic features of Jeremiah's personality?  
How did he measure up to the standard which has been set for Christians?  
What was Jeremiah's greatest desire in his ministry?  
What did "the wrath of God" mean to many of the early preachers?  
Why is strong language sometimes necessary?  
Why does such language have so little effect on some people?

### The Reaction to Jeremiah's Preaching

What was Jeremiah's relative position as a prophet?  
How does his work compare with the work of preachers of the gospel today?  
What commission did Jeremiah receive from Jehovah?  
What obligation rests upon preachers of the gospel today?  
Why is it so essential to preach the word of the Lord?  
What was the reaction to Jeremiah's preaching on the occasion of this lesson?  
Who were his principal opponents?  
Why were the priests and prophets so against him?  
What always happens when people are bent on having their own way?  
How did Jesus illustrate this truth?  
What responsibility to people have when the word of God is being preached?  
How was this truth illustrated in the ministry of Paul?  
How may one know whether or not the gospel is being preached?

Why do so many people inside the church and out of it register their opposition to plain gospel preaching?

### The Charge against and the Defense of Jeremiah

Who were the princes and why did they come to the house of Jehovah?  
What charge was placed against Jeremiah at his trial?  
What was the prophet's attitude toward the charge?  
What was his sole defense?  
What did he say to his judges?  
What course did New Testament preachers follow under similar circumstances?  
What did Jeremiah call upon his hearers to do?  
Why does the Lord apparently permit those who are doing his will to suffer on occasions?  
Why are wicked people often allowed to have their own way?

### The Verdict Regarding Jeremiah and Some Supporting Evidence

What was the verdict of the princes regarding Jeremiah?  
What other circumstance gives a probable insight into the general attitude of the rulers regarding the preaching of the prophets?  
Why was Uriah put to death and Jeremiah spared for preaching the same thing?  
What further supporting evidence was put forward by the elders?  
What was the reaction to Micah's preaching?  
Why the difference between the reaction of Hezekiah and that of Jehoiakim?  
Discuss the importance of repentance as it respects the way to God's mercy.  
How do many people feel regarding repentance before they enter into it?  
What change takes place when they really see what repentance is?  
In what sense is repentance a joyful gift? (Cf. Acts 11: 18; Rom. 2: 4.)

## Lesson V—August 2, 1964

## THE NEW COVENANT

### Lesson Text

#### Jer. 31: 27-37

27 Behold, the days come, saith Je-ho'-vah, that I will sow the house of Is'-ra-el and the house of Ju'-dah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast.

28 And it shall come to pass that, like as I have watched over them to pluck up and to break down and to overthrow and to destroy and to afflict, so will I watch over them to build and to plant, saith Je-ho'-vah.

29 In those days they shall say no

more, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.

30 But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.

31 Behold, the days come, saith Je-ho'-vah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Is'-ra-el, and with the house of Ju'-dah:

32 Not according to the covenant

that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of E'-gypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith Je-ho'-vah.

33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Is'-ra-el after those days, saith Je-ho'-vah: I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, Know Je-ho'-vah: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Je-ho'-vah: for I

will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more.

35 Thus saith Je-ho'-vah, who giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, who stirreth up the sea, so that the waves thereof roar; Je-ho'-vah of hosts is his name:

36 If these ordinances depart from before me, saith Je-ho'-vah, then the seed of Is'-ra-el also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.

37 Thus saith Je-ho'-vah: If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, then will I also cast off all the seed of Is'-ra-el for all that they have done, saith Je-ho'-vah.

**Golden Text.**—“For if that first covenant had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second (Heb. 8: 7.)

**Devotional Reading.**—Heb. 8: 1-13.

## Daily Bible Readings

July 27. M.....	A Covenant Between God and Man (Gen. 2: 1-16)
July 28. T.....	God's Covenant with Noah (Gen. 9: 12-16)
July 29. W.....	God's Covenant with Abraham (Gen. 17: 1-8)
July 30. T.....	A Covenant with Isaac (Gen. 17: 15-27)
July 31. ....	F. A Covenant with Abimelech (Gen. 21: 22-34)
August 1. S.....	A New Covenant Unlike the Old (Heb. 8: 1-13)
August 2. S.....	Superiority of New Covenant (Heb. 9: 1-28)

**Time.**—About 594 B.C.

**Place.**—Jerusalem.

**Persons.**—Jeremiah and the people of Judah.

## Introduction

The term “covenant” literally means an agreement between two parties, binding them to cooperation and mutual service on certain specified conditions, which were designated “the words of the covenant.” When two tribes, for example, desired to live together in peace, intermarry, and trade with each other, they made a covenant. When a king was chosen, a covenant was confirmed between him and his subjects. Even conspirators could bind themselves together by a covenant, and so can friends. “And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.” (1 Sam. 18: 1-3.)

The idea of a covenant between two parties is an old one, but its greatest impression on the human mind is probably to be found in the application between God and his people. This relationship was a daring conception, yet there was no irreverence in it, no lowering of the Divine supremacy; for such a relationship does not necessarily imply a relationship of equality. *The Speaker's Bible* notes that a conqueror might make a covenant with a vanquished people, thereby sparing them when they were at his mercy, and admitting them to terms of mutual respect and obligation. There was therefore no arrogance in the idea of a covenant between Jehovah and his people; but it did require courageous faith to conceive of God as being willing to deal with his children after this manner. It may, in fact, be thought of as an anticipation of that “boldness toward

God" (1 John 3: 21) which is the supreme privilege of Christian sonship

The Hebrew word for "covenant" in the lesson text now before us, is *berith*, and the corresponding Greek term is *diathekē*. William Barclay (*A New Testament Wordbook*) says that the normal Greek word for a covenant between two people is *suntheke*. This, he says, is the word everywhere used for a marriage covenant, or an agreement between persons or states. *Suntheke*, however, is not a New Testament word, and the reason for its omission, according to Barclay, is this: "*Suntheke*, always describes 'an agreement made on equal terms,' an agreement which either party can alter. But the word 'covenant' means something different. God and man do not meet on equal terms; it means that God, of his own choice and in his free grace, offered man this relationship, which man cannot alter or change or annul, but which he can only accept or refuse. Now the supreme example of such an agreement is 'a will.' The conditions of a will are not made on equal terms. They are made by one person and accepted by the other, who cannot alter them and who could not have made them.

"Our relationship with God is not something into which we entered in our own right and on our own terms; it is something given to us solely and completely on the initiative and in the grace of God. Philo says, 'A covenant is a symbol of grace which God sets between himself *who extends the*

*boon and man who receives it.*' It is fitting for God to give and for a wise man to receive

"The very word 'covenant,' *diathekē*, is a word which in itself sums up our 'debt' and our 'duty' to God. We are in 'debt' because our new relationship to God is due to the approach of God and to nothing that we could ever have done. We have a 'duty' because we have to accept God's conditions of love and faith and obedience, and we cannot alter them. The very word shows that we can never meet God on equal terms, but only on terms of submission and of gratitude." (P. 31.)

In one of her golden books, *The Covenant of Life and Peace*, Dora Greenwell says, "I sometimes wish that we were, as a people, more in the habit of considering our relations with God under what may be called their covenanted aspect. Salvation in Christ is not only a gift from God to man, it is also a bond, a living perpetual tie, placing us in assured relations with the Father, and enabling us to take up that ancient plea, 'have respect unto the Covenant,' with all the energies of the renewed nature. 'The writings of the New Covenant,' how I love this, the title by which the Gospel writings collectively were known to the primitive Church! It brings them before us as that which they truly are, the very bonds and indentures of our fellowship in Christ Jesus."

## The Golden Text

*For if that first covenant had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second.* These words are taken from Hebrews, where the writer shows that the prophecy of Jeremiah has been fulfilled in the new covenant which was made by Christ. "But now hath he obtained a ministry the more excellent, by so much as he is also the mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second. For finding fault with them, he saith," and then gives the quotation from Jer. 31: 31-34, apparently from the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament. The writer then concludes,

"In that he saith, A new *covenant*, he hath made the first old. But that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away." (Read Heb. 8: 6-13.)

The words of the golden text seem to be an expansion of the thought which the writer put forward in Heb. 7: 11, 12: "Now if there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be reckoned after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law." A change in the priesthood and the law shows that perfection could not be obtained

under the first covenant; and so the writer says, "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second." The expression "would have been sought" is a translation of *ezêteito*, the imperfect passive of *zêteō*, which Vincent renders, "would have been being sought," that is, a search would not have been going on. This, as Vincent points out, implies a sense of dissatisfaction while the old covenant was still in force, and looking about for something better.

The old covenant was not faulty *per se*; the imperfection was due to the fact that imperfect people could not keep a perfect law. Paul says, "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." (Rom. 8: 3, 4; cf. 7: 12-16.) The passage just quoted is rendered by Moffatt in these words: "For God has done what the Law, weakened here by the flesh, could not do; by sending his own Son in the guise of sinful flesh, to deal with sin, 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." The law was perfect, in and of itself; but it was unsatisfactory as a means of human redemption, because it made no allowance for the fallen nature of man. (Cf. Acts 13: 38, 39; Gal. 3: 21.)

## The Text Explained

### The Repopulation of Israel and Judah and Individual Responsibility and Retribution

(Jer. 31: 27-30)

*Behold, the days come saith Jehovah, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass that, like as I have watched over them to pluck up and to break down and to overthrow and to destroy and to afflict, so will I watch over them to build and to plant, saith Jehovah. In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.*

The thirtieth and thirty-first chapters of Jeremiah should be read together; for they give God's picture of the restoration of his people. "Behold, the tempest of Jehovah, even his wrath, is gone forth, a sweeping tempest: it shall burst upon the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of Jehovah shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the intents of his heart: in the latter days ye shall understand it." (Jer. 30: 23, 24.) The "latter days" apparently refer to the time of Christ. It is only by and through Christ that such a deliverance can be accomplished; and only then can

its full significance be understood. Adam Clarke, in commenting on this passage, says, "By the latter days the Gospel dispensation is generally meant; and the restoration which is the principal topic in this and the succeeding chapter refers to this time. Had the Jews properly considered this subject, they would long ere this have been brought into the liberty of the Gospel, and saved from the maledictions under which they now groan. Why do not the Jews read their own prophets more conscientiously?" (Read Paul's discussion of the rejection of the Jews in Romans, chapters 9-11.)

God's purpose in restoring his people to their homeland, and eventually to him through Christ, was based, not on their merit, but on his great love for them. "Jehovah appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." (Jer. 31: 3.) "Thus saith Jehovah: A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children; she refuseth to be comforted for her children, because they are not. Thus saith Jehovah: Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith Jehovah; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope for thy latter end, saith Jehovah; and thy children shall come again to their own border." (Jer.



31: 15-17; cf. Matt. 2: 16-18.) "Set thee up waymarks, make thee guideposts; set thy heart toward the highway, even the way by which thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities. How long wilt thou go hither and thither, O thou backsliding daughter? for Jehovah hath created a new thing in the earth: A woman shall encompass a man." (Jer. 31: 21, 22.) While Bible students differ widely regarding the meaning of the last part of verse 22, just quoted, many are of the opinion that the reference is to the virgin conception of Christ, that being the "new thing" which Jehovah created. (See A. R. Fausset, Matthew Henry, E. M. Zerr, *in loco*.)

But whatever may be the true meaning of the passage just referred to, we do know that God's promise was such as to make the future state of his people most attractive. It had been necessary for God to punish his people, but his anger would not last for ever. (Cf. Jer. 3: 5, 12.) As he had had plucked up, overthrown, and destroyed, so he would watch over them to build and to plant. The remark regarding the sour grapes and the teeth being put on edge was a proverbial saying that the children had to suffer the evil consequences of their fathers' conduct. But God wants his people to know that every individual will be held responsible for his own deeds. The inexorable law of God is that each individual shall reap that which he sows. (See Gal. 6: 7, 8; cf. Eccles. 12: 13, 14; 2 Cor. 5: 10.)

### The New State Required a New Covenant

(Jer. 31: 31-34)

*Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith Jehovah. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith Jehovah: I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more*

*every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more.*

The first covenant which Jehovah made with Israel was at mount Sinai, soon after the release of the people from Egyptian bondage. The basis of this covenant was the Ten Commandments, and the primary application was to fleshly Israel. Children who were born to Jewish parents were automatically included (male children were required to be circumcised at eight days of age), and had to be taught regarding Jehovah and his law when they were to enough to understand. They were therefore under the terms of the covenant before they were old enough to know anything about either it or God who made the covenant with his people. This covenant was intended to meet all the needs of the people under it for government and direction as long as it was in force. The Ten Commandments, as already indicated, may be thought of as the constitution of the theocracy, and all the other statutes and ordinances were based upon and were entirely in harmony with that Great Code.

It was pointed out in the discussion of the golden text that Paul's language there is such as to indicate that, speaking after the manner of men, a way was being sought for a better covenant, even while the old one was still in force. This is enough to show that the first covenant was never intended to be permanent; it was a kind of "temporary measure" to last until Christ should come. "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. 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 of faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." (Gal. 3: 19-22.)

There are several essential differ-

ences between the old and new covenants. (1) The law of the new is written in the hearts of the people, rather than upon tables of stones, as the first was. The Ten Commandments were written upon tables of stone, while the other statutes and ordinances were written upon skins and other materials of a perishable nature. (2) The relation between God and his people, under the new covenant, is raised to include the end and aim of all religion. It involves, as Bewer points out, a radical change of the will, a renewal of the heart (Jer. 24: 7), and the spontaneously doing of that which God requires. (3) People under the new covenant must be taught about the Lord before they can become his people. (Cf. Matt. 28: 19; John 6: 44, 45; Rom. 1: 16, 17; 10: 1-3.) All of this specifically excludes infant church-membership. (4) Sins are instantaneously and completely forgiven under the new, with no further remembrance of them, as was true under the old. (Cf. Heb. 10: 1-4.)

### The Immutable Promise of God Regarding: His People

(Jer. 31: 35-37)

*Thus saith Jehovah, who giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, who stirreth up the sea, so that the waves thereof roar; Jehovah of hosts is his name: If these ordinances depart from before me, saith Jehovah, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith Jehovah: If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, then will I also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith Jehovah.*

It appears very probable that the passage just quoted has a twofold application, namely, (1) to the continuance of Israel as a distinct people, and (2) to the perpetual endurance of spiritual Israel, that is, the church of the New Testament. If this is true, then fleshly Israel will continue as a separate people as long as the order of nature remains intact. In commenting on this phase of the subject, Fausset says, "Israel's *national* polity has been broken up by the Romans. But their preservation as a

*distinct people* amidst violent persecutions, though scattered among all nations for eighteen centuries, *un-amalgamated*, whereas all other peoples under such circumstances have become incorporated with the nations in which they have been dispersed, is a perpetual standing miracle." And in speaking of the same question, Adam Clarke makes this observation: "Hitherto this prophecy has been literally fulfilled; the Jews are still a distinct people from all the dwellers upon the earth. Every attempt that has been made in any country to *naturalize* and unite them with the people of that country, has proved abortive. The well-circumstanced attempt made this year (1830) in England, when the strongest interest was excited in their behalf, has also utterly failed. And why? Because of God's *purpose* expressed in chap. 31: 35-37 of the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah."

But that the prophecy of Jeremiah, in the passage just cited, also has reference to spiritual Israel during the reign of Christ is made almost certain by a similar prediction in Jer. 33: 19-22. "And the word of Jehovah came unto Jeremiah, saying, Thus saith Jehovah: If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, so that there shall not be day and night in their season; then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he shall not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers. As the hosts of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured; so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me."

The quotations from Jeremiah are only two of the many passages in the Bible which set forth, in unmistakable terms, the enduring nature of the church or kingdom of Christ. "And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." (Dan. 2: 44.) "And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it [literally, "her," since the

pronoun which is rendered "it" is in the feminine gender]." (Matt. 16: 18.) "Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us

have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe: for our God is a consuming fire." (Heb. 12: 28, 29.)

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What is the meaning of the term "covenant"?  
Under what circumstances may a covenant be made?  
Discuss the covenant between Jonathan and David.  
What are some of the implications in a covenant between God and mankind?  
What are the relative positions of God and the people in a covenant between them?  
How should God's covenanted people feel toward this relationship?

### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of this text written?  
What lesson do we learn from Paul's argument regarding the old and new covenants?  
Why was a second covenant necessary?

### The Repopulation of Israel and Judah and Individual Responsibility and Retribution

Discuss God's promise of the restoration of Israel and Judah.  
To what do the "latter days" refer? Give reasons for your answer.  
Why do Jews generally disregard God's promise with reference to these matters?  
What great motive prompted God in restoring his people and blessing them through Christ?  
What are some of the notable statements which were made regarding these matters?

In what way did the prophet Jeremiah emphasize personal responsibility and retribution?

What is God's inexorable law of the harvest?  
Why is this truth so lightly regarded by so many people?

### The New State Required a New Covenant

Under what conditions was the first covenant with Israel made?  
What were some of the principal features of it?  
When were people taught the terms of it?  
What was the over-all purpose of the first covenant?  
Discuss the essential differences between the old and the new covenants.  
What principal fact precludes infant church-membership?

### The Immutable Promise of God Regarding His People

What is apparently the two fold application of this section of the lesson text?  
What lesson do we learn regarding the enduring nature of fleshly Israel?  
How alone can this be accounted for?  
What impression should this make on all thoughtful people?  
What is the secondary application of the lesson text now before us?  
How do we know that the reference is to spiritual Israel?  
What lesson do we learn from the two prophecies of Jeremiah?  
Discuss other references to the enduring nature of the church or kingdom.  
What impression should this truth make on us?

## Lesson VI—August 9, 1964

## JEREMIAH IN PRISON

### Lesson Text

Jer. 37: 11-21

11 And it came to pass that, when the army of the Chal-de'-ans was broken up from Je-ru'-sa-lem for fear of Pha'-raoh's army,

12 Then Jer-e-mi'-ah went forth out of Je-ru'-sa-lem to go into the land of B6n'-ja-min, to receive his portion there, in the midst of the people.

13 And when he was in the gate of Ben'-ja-min, a captain of the ward was there, whose name was i-ri'-jah, the son of Shel-e-mi'-ah, the son of Han-a-ni'-ah; and he laid hold on Jer-e-mi'-ah the prophet, saying, Thou art falling away to the Chal-de'-ans.

14 Then said Jer-e-mi'-ah, It is false; I am not falling away to the Chal-de'-ans. But he hearkened not to him; so I-ri'-jah laid hold on Jer-e-mi'-ah, and brought him to the princes.

15 And the princes were wroth with Jer-e-mi'-ah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jon'-a-than the scribe; for they had made that the prison.

16 When Jer-e-mi'-ah was come into the dungeon-house, and into the cells, and Jer-e-mi'-ah had remained there many days;

17 Then Zed-e-ki'-ah the king sent, and fetched him: and the king

asked him secretly in his house, and said, Is there any word from Je-ho'-vah? And Jer-e-mi'-ah said, There is. He said also, Thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Bab'-y-lon.

18 Moreover Jer-e-mi'-ah said unto king Zed-e-ki'-ah, Wherein have I sinned against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that ye have put me in prison?

19 Where now are your prophets that prophesied unto you, saying, The king of Bab'-y-lon shall not come against you, nor against this land?

20 And now hear, I pray thee, O my lord the king: let my supplication, I pray thee, be presented before thee, that thou cause me not to return to the house of Jon'-a-than the scribe, lest I die there.

21 Then Zed-e-ki'-ah the king commanded, and they committed Jer-e-mi'-ah into the court of the guard; and they gave him daily a loaf of bread out of the bakers' street, until all the bread in the city was spent. Thus Jer-e-mi'-ah remained in the court of the guard.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire; and Jeremiah sank in the mire"* (Jer. 38: 6.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Jer. 38: 1-28.

### Daily Bible Readings

August 3. M.....	Persecuted for Righteousness' Sake (Matt. 5: 3-11)
August 4. T.....	Paul's Imprisonments (2 Cor. 11: 16-23)
August 5. W.....	Joseph in Prison (Gen. 39: 1-20)
August 6. T.....	Daniel Persecuted (Dan. 6: 1-9)
August 7. F.....	Zedekiah in Prison (Jer. 52: 1-11)
August 8. S.....	Persecution of the Early Church (Acts 8: 1-8)
August 9. S.....	Jeremiah in a Dungeon (Jer. 38: 1-6)

TIME.—About 590 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jeremiah, some officials, and Zedekiah the king.

### Introduction

The Book of Jeremiah is made up of biography, history, and prophecy; and inasmuch as the various parts are not always arranged chronologically, it is sometimes difficult to get the proper setting of a given passage. For example, in Jer. 32: 2 it is said "Now at that time the king of Babylon's army was besieging Jerusalem; and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the guard, which was in the king of Judah's house." And then in Jer. 37: 4 we read, "Now Jeremiah came in and went out among the people; for they had not put him into prison." The first passage apparently refers to Jeremiah's retention in "the court of the guard," a kind of open space which was occupied by the guard, but which was not closed to the friends of the prophet who wished to visit him. (Cf. Jer. 32: 6ff.) The time of this imprisonment was during the siege of the city, which was temporarily lifted when the king of Babylon heard of the movements of the armies of Egypt (cf. Jer. 37: 3-10.) The prison referred to in verse 4 of the passage just

cited was not the court of the guard, but the dungeon which was in the house of Jonathan.

It appears that the king himself was responsible for Jeremiah's retention in the court of the guard, while the imprisonment in the dungeon at the house of Jonathan was imposed by the princes. "Now at that time the king of Babylon's army was besieging Jerusalem; and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the guard, which was in the king of Judah's house. For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying, Wherefore dost thou prophesy, and say, Thus saith Jehovah, Behold I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it; 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: though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye

shall not prosper?" (Jer. 32: 2-5.) The account of the prophet's imprisonment in the dungeon in the house of Jonathan is found in the lesson text for today.

As one reads and studies the Bible, he will be impressed with the fact that human nature is practically the same in any age of the world. Men all through the centuries have been punished for telling others exactly that which God wanted them to know. In the language of Stephen, "Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? and they killed them that showed before the coming of the Righteous One; of whom ye have now become betrayers and murderers; ye who received the law as it was ordained by angels, and kept it not." (Acts 7: 52, 53.) In a scathing denunciation of the religious

leaders of his day, Jesus said, "Therefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city." (Matt. 23: 34.)

Not only has the persecution of God's messengers been the sad story throughout the entire history of the Bible, it still is. When Jesus gave the commission to his disciples just before he ascended back to heaven, he charged them to preach the gospel, and told them exactly what to say; but let a faithful gospel preacher today repeat that message to others and tell them what to expect if they obey not the gospel, and and see what the result will be. (Cf. Mark 16: 15, 16; Acts 2: 14-41; 2 Thess. 1: 7-9; 1 Pet. 4: 12-19.)

### The Golden Text

*"And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire; and Jeremiah sank in the mire."* This is the third imprisonment which Jeremiah suffered, referred to in the lesson we are now studying. The facts leading up to the one mentioned here are as follows: "And Shephatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashhur, and Jucal the son of Shel-emiah, and Pashhur the son of Malchijah, heard the words that Jeremiah spake unto all the people, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, He that abideth in this 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. Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchijah the king's son, that was in the court of the guard: and they let Jeremiah down with cords. And

in the dungeon there was no water, but mire; and Jeremiah sank in the mire." (Jer. 38: 1-6.)

The original word for "dungeon" in the passage just quoted is *bor*, and its literal meaning is pit or cistern (cf. Jer. 2: 13; 2 Kings 18: 31; Eccles. 12: 6), whereas, the original for "dungeonhouse" (Jer. 37: 16) is *beth hab-bor* (house of the pit). It is possible that the people in the besieged city had either used up the water in the cistern, or had allowed it to run out, leaving only mire; and they no doubt thought that Jeremiah would be stifled to death in the mire. That was evidently their plan to get rid of the man who was faithfully speaking God's word to them.

But when the fury of people who should listen to the Lord's messengers to them has been aroused, its victims are usually not far wrong when they expect to receive the worst kind of treatment. When Paul asked Timothy to come to him before winter, and to bring the cloak which he had left at Troas with Carpus, he probably felt that he would need it for physical comfort in the musty dungeon where he was chained. (Read 2 Tim. 4: 9ff.) During the latter part of the ministry of Alexander Campbell, he was imprisoned a number of times because of false and distorted testimony on the part of religious opponents; and while he was never convicted, he did have to spend time in prisons which were far from being

comfortable. During one of his incarcerations, which took place while he was on a preaching tour and which was later called the disgrace of Scotland, he was placed in a damp

and otherwise unhealthy prison. And while he lived a number of years after his release, he never recovered from the damage which was done to his health.

### The Text Explained

The Occasion for Jeremiah's  
Imprisonment  
(Jer. 37: 11-15)

*And it came to pass that, when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army, then Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin, to receive his portion there, in the midst of the people. And when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the ward was there, whose name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah; and he laid hold on Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou art falling away to the Chaldeans. Then said Jeremiah, It is false; I am not falling away to the Chaldeans. But he hearkened not to him; so Irijah laid hold on Jeremiah, and brought him to the princes. And the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe; for they had made that the prison.*

According to Josephus (Ant. 10: 7, 3), Zedekiah sought help from the king of Egypt against the king of Babylon; and when the former heard that the Chaldeans were besieging Jerusalem, he moved his army in that direction with the intention of aiding Zedekiah. However, when the Chaldeans temporarily lifted the siege and went forth to meet the Egyptians, defeated them, and drove them out of Syria. Josephus then goes on to say, "Now as soon as the king of Babylon was departed from Jerusalem, the false prophets deceived Zedekiah, and said that the king of Babylon would not any more make war against him or his people, nor remove them out of their own country into Babylon; and that those then in captivity would return, with all those vessels of the temple of which the king of Babylon had despoiled that temple. But Jeremiah came among them, and prophesied what contradicted those predictions, and what proved to be true, that they did ill, and deluded the king; that the Egyptians would be of no advantage to them, but that the

king of Babylon would renew the war against Jerusalem, and besiege it again, and would destroy the people by famine, and carry away those that remained into captivity, and would take away what they had as spoils, and would carry off those riches that were in the temple; nay, that, besides this, he would burn it, and utterly overthrow the city, and that they should serve him and his posterity seventy years; . . ."

Jeremiah's home was in Anathoth, a Levitical or priestly city in the land of Benjamin, some three miles north of Jerusalem. (Cf. Josh. 21: 18; Neh. 11: 32.) It appears that the prophet owned some property in Anathoth, probably in addition to that which he was told to buy in Jer. 32: 6-25; and, taking advantage of the lifting of the siege, he "went forth out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin, to receive his portion there, in the midst of the people." The original term rendered "to receive his portion" is in keeping with the definition which is given by Brown, Driver, and Briggs (*Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*), but other versions of the Bible give a somewhat different meaning. The King James, for example, says that Jeremiah went "to separate himself," while Moffatt, more in keeping with the text now before us, has, "to take over some property."

Taking into consideration the fact that the country had been under siege, it is possible that Jeremiah took advantage of the absence of the Chaldeans, and went to get his property under his control again, or perhaps to arrange to live there a part of the time, thus dividing his time between his home in Anathoth and Jerusalem. At any rate, there is no indication that there was anything improper about his proposed trip to his native village and his business while there. But as he was about to leave Jerusalem, by way of the Benjamin gate, which was evidently on the north side of the city, a captain of

of the guard who was apparently stationed there laid hold on the prophet and accused him of being a deserter and a traitor to his country.

It is easy, of course, to impugn the motives of those who are unpopular with the multitude, and especially so if the one so accused has been condemning the course of the others. Hostility toward Jeremiah had been mounting for sometime, and now it was about to take on a definite and concrete form. The prophet had told the leaders in Jerusalem that they could not depend upon the Egyptians for help against the Chaldeans; but that if they would surrender to the army of Babylon their lot would be much easier. That, to them, was treason, and any move on the part of Jeremiah would be subject to the utmost scrutiny. It is very difficult for people who manifest the attitude which characterized the opponents of Jeremiah to give due credit to others, even in the ordinary things of life. This principle is as obvious in religious circles, as it was in the affairs of state in Jeremiah's day.

The response of Jeremiah to the charge of treason, however, was unmistakable; but appearances under such conditions can be so construed as to silence the man who had become so sharp a thorn in the political flesh of the rulers of the city. The controlling princes who were then opposing Jeremiah were apparently not the ones who had stood by him during the days of Jehoiakim. (See Jer. 26: 10-19.) The princes who had supported Jeremiah in earlier days were probably among the "good figs" which had been carried to Babylon, while the one of the lesson now under consideration were among the "bad figs" which could not be eaten. (Read Jer. 24: 1-10.) The sentry (Irijah) who arrested Jeremiah refused to accept the prophet's explanation regarding his movements, and took him to the princes. "And the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe; for they had made that the prison."

### The King's Interview with Jeremiah

(Jer. 37: 16, 17)

*When Jeremiah was come into the dungeon-house, and into the cells, and Jeremiah had remained there many days; then Zedekiah the king*

*sent, and fetched him: and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said, Is there any word from Jehovah? And Jeremiah said, There is. He said also, Thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon.*

The marginal reading for "dungeon-house" is *house of the pit*. It seems therefore that the prison into which Jeremiah was cast consisted of a pit (the dungeon), with *vaulted cells*, that is, subterranean rooms, connected with it. This was a different prison-house from the one which is mentioned in the golden text. The one here was designed as a prison-house for criminals, while the one described in the following chapter, as already pointed out, was a cistern with no water in it, but only mire. While the dungeon-house and its cells, which belonged to Jonathan was suitable for malefactors of any kind, it also was a suitable place to detain those who were suspected of evil intent until the proper disposition could be made with them. This, apparently, was why Jeremiah was placed therein.

We do not know just how long Jeremiah was in Jonathan's prison; the text simply says that he remained there many days. It is very probable that the Chaldeans by this time had return from the defeat of the Egyptians, and had resumed their siege of Jerusalem; but if not, the king would certainly want to find out something about what to expect. He therefore had Jeremiah brought secretly into his house, and asked him the direct question, "Is there any word from Jehovah?" This indicates something of the pitiful plight of the weak king. He was not sure of the wisdom of the war policy of his advisers and feared the outcome, but he was also incapable of taking a firm stand of his own; and it was for that reason that he sought the help of the prophet.

It is pathetic to watch people who desperately want help, and who evidently know where to find it, but who are both ashamed and afraid to be seen by their contemporaries as they endeavor to obtain the needed information and assistance. That, apparently, was Zedekiah's trouble, but he was not the only one who has been caught in such a predicament. "Nevertheless even of the rulers

many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that is of men more than the glory that is God." (John 12: 42, 43.) Why will people manifest such weakness when their own salvation is at stake? (Cf. Matt. 16: 24-26.) A person of strong character does not hesitate to seek for the truth wherever he can find it; and he is neither ashamed nor afraid to be seen seeking for help at any place where he thinks he can find it.

Although Jeremiah was in straitened circumstances himself, he was true to God in his reply to the king. The king had asked him if there was any word from Jehovah, and that was evidently what he thought he wanted; but it is interesting to note that the inspired message was precisely the one which had brought the prophet into disfavor with the king and his princes. The shy and sensitive young man from Anathoth who had said at the beginning, "Ah, Lord Jehovah! behold, I know not how to speak; for I am a child," had learned the truth of the assurance which God had given to him: "For, behold, I made thee this day a fortified city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee, saith Jehovah, to deliver thee." (Jer. 1:6, 18, 19.)

While it is pathetic to see a weakling who is ashamed and afraid to turn openly to the source of the help which he so desperately needs; it is even more so to see a man who knows the truth and is either ashamed or afraid to declare it openly. Some preachers seem to be more interested in protecting their own skin and popularity, than they are in trying to save the souls of men. Such men should go into the quiet of their closet and ask God to help them as they read the record of Paul before the terrified Felix and Drusilla (Acts 24: 24-27), and his final charge to his son Timothy in the gospel (2 Tim. 4: 1-8). There are many things worse than prisons, and not the least of them is unfaithfulness to the trust which God has imposed in one. Even

in prison, Paul could write, "Now I would have you know, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel; so that my bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole praetorian guard, and to all the rest; and that most of the brethren in the Lord, being confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear." (Phil. 1: 12-14.)

#### Jeremiah's Plea for Clemency

(Jer. 37: 18-21)

*Moreover Jeremiah said unto king Zedekiah, Wherein have I sinned against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that ye have put me in prison? Where now are your prophets that prophesied unto you, saying, The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this land? And now hear, I pray thee, O my lord the king: let my supplication, I pray thee, be presented before thee, that thou cause me not to return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there. Then Zedekiah the king commanded, and they committed Jeremiah into the court of the guard; and they gave him daily a loaf of bread out of the bakers' street, until all the bread in the city was spent. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard.*

After speaking God's message to the king, Jeremiah asked Zedekiah two pointed questions, namely, (1) Wherein had he sinned that he should be put in prison? and (2) Where were the prophets who said that the king of Babylon would come against him and the land of Judah? These no doubt were embarrassing questions for the king, but it is to his credit that he did not punish Jeremiah further, but instead relieved his situation somewhat. It was natural for Jeremiah to plead for his life, for he realized that if he had to continue in the prison of Jonathan that he would die; but to him death under such circumstances was much more preferable than unfaithfulness to God. The attitude which Jeremiah manifested was not the result of accident, but the natural consequence of devotion to a trust. (Read Jer. 20: 7-13.) No amount of abuse and punishment could deter Jeremiah from doing that which God expected of him.



## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

What facts must be taken into consideration in studying the Book of Jeremiah?

In what places was Jeremiah imprisoned?

Why and by whom was he placed in

them?

What lesson do we learn from Jeremiah's experience regarding human nature?

Show that the same conditions are true in our day.

### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances was Jeremiah placed in the dungeon of this text?

What kind of place was it and why did they want to put him there?

Give some illustrations of how the same situations prevail today.

### The Occasion for Jeremiah's Imprisonment

Why did Jeremiah attempt to leave Jerusalem?

Where was he planning to go and why?

What was Jeremiah's experience with the false prophets of his day?

Who arrested Jeremiah?

How did the prophet react to his accuser?

What was then done?

Why were the people of Jerusalem so violently opposed to Jeremiah?

Why is it so easy for some people to impugn the motives of others?

How do you account for the change of attitude toward Jeremiah on the part of the princes?

Where was Jeremiah imprisoned at the time of this section of the lesson text?

### The King's Interview with Jeremiah

Tell something of the prison in which Jeremiah was confined when Zedekiah sent for him.

How long was the prophet in Jonathan's prison-house?

Why did the king want to talk with the prophet?

What indications do we get here regarding his character?

What question did he ask Jeremiah?

How does the king's plight illustrate the moral condition of many people today?

How did Jeremiah respond to the king's question?

What did his response reveal regarding the prophet's character?

How had Jehovah's prediction concerning Jeremiah come true?

Why do some preachers hesitate about speaking the full truth regarding all questions?

What exercise would probably greatly help some who fail in their responsibility?

### Jeremiah's Plea for Clemency

What questions did Jeremiah put to Zedekiah?

Why could the prophet be so bold under such circumstances?

Why did Jeremiah make his appeal for clemency?

How did he regard faithfulness to the trust which Jehovah had imposed in him?

What lesson should we all learn from this?

Cite some scriptures which reveal something of the motive which actuated Jeremiah?

How did he cultivate such characteristics?

How can we be sure that we, too, can be like Jeremiah in this respect?

What personal benefits do you feel that you have received from the study of the life and work of Jeremiah?

## Lesson VII—August 16, 1964

# JUDGMENT UPON BABYLON

### Lesson Text

Jer. 51: 33-40, 54-58

33 For thus saith Je-ho'-vah of hosts, the God of Is'-ra-el: The daughter of Bab'-y-lōn is like a threshing-floor at the time when it is trodden; yet a little while, and the time of harvest shall come for her.

34 Neb-u-chad-rēz'-zar the king of Bab'-y-lon hath devoured me, he hath crushed me, he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath, like a monster, swallowed me up, he hath filled his maw with my delicacies; he hath cast me out.

35 The violence done to me and to my flesh be upon Bab'-y-lōn, shall the inhabitant of Zi-on say; and, My blood be upon the inhabitants of Chal-de'-a, shall Je-ru'-sa-lem say.

36 Therefore thus saith Je-hō'-vah: Behold, I will plead thy cause, and take vengeance for thee; and I will dry up her sea, and make her fountain dry.

37 And Bab'-y-lon shall become heaps, a dwelling-place for jackals, an astonishment, and a hissing, without inhabitant.

38 They shall roar together like young lions; they shall growl as lions' whelps.

39 When they are heated, I will make their feast, and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith Je-ho'-vah.

40 I will bring them down like

lambs to the slaughter, like rams with he-goats.

54 The sound of a cry from Bab'-y-lon, and of great destruction from the land of the Chal-de'-ans!

55 For Je-ho'-vah layeth Bab'-y-lon waste, and destroyeth out of her the great voice; and their waves roar like many waters; the noise of their voice is uttered:

56 For the destroyer is come upon her, even upon Bab'-y-lon, and her mighty men are taken, their bows are broken in pieces; for Je-ho'-vah

is a God of recompenses, he will surely require

57 And I will make drunk her princes and her wise men, her governors and her deputies, and her mighty men; and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the King, whose name is Je-ho'-vah of hosts.

58 Thus saith Je-ho'-vah of hosts: The board walls of Bab'-y-lon shall be utterly overthrown, and her high gates shall be burned with fire; and the peoples shall labor for vanity, and the nations for the fire; and they shall be weary.

**Golden Text.**—*"Every one that goeth by Babylon shall be astonished, and hiss at all her plagues"*(Jer. 50: 13.)

**Devotional Reading.**—Jer. 51: 1-32.

### Daily Bible Readings

August 10. M.....	Judgment Upon the Gods of Egypt (Ex. 14: 1-13)
August 11. T.....	Hour of God's Judgment (Rev. 14: 1-7)
August 12. W.....	All Appear in Judgment (2 Cor. 5: 1-10)
August 13. T.....	Rewarded According to Deeds (Dan. 12: 1-3)
August 14. F.....	Babylon a Hiss and Desolation (Jer. 50: 1-13)
August 15. S.....	Babylon a Symbol of Apostasy (Rev. 17: 1-5)
August 16. S.....	Babylon Destroyed (Rev. 18: 1-10)

**Time.**—595 B.C.

**Place.**—Jerusalem.

**Persons.**—Jeremiah and the people of Judah.

### Introduction

It would be difficult to describe all the misery which the Chaldeans heaped upon the people of Judah; but it all came as the result of the continuous rebellion of Jehovah's people against him. God had repeatedly warned them that they would be severely punished, unless they changed their ways for the better; but nothing that was said had any noticeable effect upon their conduct. "The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (the same was the first year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon), which Jeremiah the prophet spake unto all the people of Judah, and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, even unto this day, these three and twenty years, the word of Jehovah hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising up early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened. And Jehovah hath sent unto you all this servants

the prophets, rising up early and sending them (but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear), saying, Return ye now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that Jehovah hath given unto you and to your fathers, from of old and even for evermore; and go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the work of your hands; and I will do you no hurt. Yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith Jehovah; that ye may provoke me to anger with the work of your hands to your own hurt. Therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Because ye have not heard my words, behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith Jehovah, and I will send unto Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about; and I will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and a hissing,

and perpetual desolations. Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the lamp. And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years." (Jer. 25: 1-11.)

When a righteous God tells his people what to expect if they continue their sinful practices, there will be no question about the outcome. "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 dieth 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? For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. 10: 26-31; cf. Deut. 32: 35ff.) As long as there is life and a willingness to return to God, that can be done; but when people persist in their evil ways until the end of the way, then nothing but eternal destruction can be their lot.

### The Golden Text

*"Every one that goeth by Babylon shall be astonished, and hiss at all her plagues "* Jehovah did not, as a rule, punish his people personally in Old Testament times, but used wicked nations as instruments or agencies by which the necessary affliction was brought upon them. When God called those wicked nations his servants (Jer. 27: 6; cf. Isa. 10: 5-11), that did not mean that he was pleased with their personal life; he was simply using a wicked king and his subjects to accomplish his divine purpose. The fact that wicked people were used to punish God's people was the question which Habakkuk could not understand, until he asked Jehovah and received his explanation. (See Hab. 1: 12-2: 8; cf. Jer. 50: 17-20.)

After assuring the people of Judah that their captivity was certain, Jehovah then said this, "And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith Jehovah, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it desolate for ever. And I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations.

For many nations and great kings shall make bondmen of them, even of them; and I will recompense them according to their deeds, and according to the work of their hands." (Jer. 25: 12-14.)

The practical application of this lesson to us is found in the overruling providence of God. Two of the ultimate aims of the Lord in his dealings with the people of the earth are (1) the reward of the righteous, (2) the punishment of the wicked. Inasmuch as there is in practically every righteous person some dross which must be removed before the final entrance into heaven, the necessary steps for the accomplishment of that process is usually by means of temporary punishment, in which the wicked often figure; but as certain as God is in his heaven, the wicked will be punished in the end. (See 2 Thess. 1: 3-10; cf. 1 Pet. 4: 12-19.) If professed followers of Christ are willing to accept that which the Bible says about God (and they cannot please him if they do not, cf. Heb. 11: 6); if he believes that God is good and only good, and that he is all-wise, ever-present, and has the power to bless beyond their ability to conceive, how can they be resentful or unconcerned regarding God's providential guidance?

## The Text Explained

### The Time of Harvest Is Near

(Jer. 51: 33-35)

*For thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: The daughter of Babylon is like a threshing-floor at the time when it is trodden; yet a little while, and the time of harvest shall come for her. Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me, he hath crushed me, he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath, like a monster, swallowed me up, he' hath filled his maw with my delicacies; he hath cast me out. The violence done to me and to my flesh be upon Babylon, shall the inhabitant of Zion say; and, My blood be upon the inhabitants of Chaldea, shall Jerusalem say.*

When Babylon was overrunning the land of Judah, she was comparable to a destroying mountain, but now all of that had been changed. Instead of being used by Jehovah for punishing his rebellious people, the Lord said, "Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith Jehovah, which destroyest all the earth; and I will stretch out my hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain. And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations; but thou shalt be desolate for ever, saith Jehovah." (Jer. 51: 25, 26.) Thus, instead of being the battle-axe of Jehovah, and the destroying mountain, Babylon was, at the time of this lesson likened to "a threshing-floor at the time when it is trodden."

Babylon was on the threshold of the harvest when Jeremiah uttered the words of the prophecy we are now considering; and the inexorable law of the harvest is something which every man and nation must eventually know. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6: 7); and that which is true of individuals is also true of nations. When God employed Babylon against other nations, her soldiers had both the spirit and the strength to carry on an offensive warfare; but when his purposes had been accomplished, weakness and the inability to defend even themselves was manifest on every side. "The mighty men of Babylon have forborne to fight, they remain

in their strongholds; their might hath failed; they are become as women: her dwelling-places are set on fire; her bars are broken. One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger shall meet another, to show the king of Babylon that his city is taken on every quarter; and the passages are seized, and the reeds they have burned with fire, and the men of war are affrighted." (Jer. 51: 30-32.)

The punishment which the Babylon heaped upon the people of Judah is described in verses 34, 35 of the section of the lesson text now under consideration: "Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me, he hath crushed me, he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath, like a monster, swallowed me up, he hath filled his maw with my delicacies; he hath cast me out. The violence done to me and to my flesh be upon Babylon, shall the inhabitant of Zion say; and, My blood be upon the inhabitants of Chaldea, shall Jerusalem say." The terrible condition of his people had wrung from the prophet Jeremiah this wail: "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is brought upon me." (Lam. 1: 12. Read the entire first chapter of Lamentations.)

There is, as some one has pointed out, no ode or elegy in literature which is more pathetic or more tragic than Jeremiah's wail over his desolate city; and his words also evidently gave expression to the feelings which must have stirred the hearts of others among his countrymen in those dark and troubled days. "How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! She is become as a widow, that was great among the nations! She that was a princess among the provinces is become tributary! She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks; among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her: all her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they are become her enemies." "Jerusalem hath grievously sinned; therefore she is become an unclean thing; . . . Behold, O Jehovah, my affliction; for the enemy hath magnified himself. . . . See, O Jehovah, and behold; for I am become abject. . . . Jehovah is righteous; for

I have rebelled against his commandment: hear, I pray you, all ye peoples, and behold my sorrow: my virgins and my young men are gone into captivity. I called for my lovers, but they deceived me: my priests and mine elders gave up the ghost in the city, while they sought them food to refresh their souls. Behold, O Jehovah; for I am in distress; my heart is troubled; my heart is turned within me; for I have grievously rebelled: abroad the sword bereaveth, at home there is as death." It is when people recognize their true condition and become penitent, that the Lord can bless them.

### The Lord Is the Avenger (Jer. 51: 36-40)

*Therefore thus saith Jehovah: Behold, I will plead thy cause, and take vengeance for thee; and I will dry up her sea, and make her fountain dry. And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling-place for jackals, an astonishment, and a hissing, without inhabitant. They shall roar together like young lions; they shall growl as lions' whelps. When they are heated, I will make their feast, and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith Jehovah. I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter, like rams with he-goats.*

When the punishment of God's people had been fully measured out to them, and its sanctifying effect had been seen in their lives, God was then willing to take vengeance upon their captors and bring them again to their homeland. And it was for that reason that the joy of the exiles became as high as their sorrow had been deep. And notwithstanding the fact that Babylon had been reckoned among the Greek's Seven Wonders of the World, having been raised to the height of her glory by Nebuchadnezzar, she would, as a result of her punishment, "become heaps, a dwelling-place for jackals, an astonishment, and a hissing, without inhabitant."

The terrible destruction which came upon Babylon is graphically described in the fifth chapter of Daniel. When the people in the palace were "heated" with wine, that is, inflamed, they were made participants of a feast which they did not expect,

namely, the stupefying drink of divine wrath. It was during the drunken revelry, and while profaning the sacred vessels of the temple, that the king and those with him saw the handwriting on the wall; and that which followed is a forceful illustration of the proverb which says, "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." (See Prov. 16: 18.) Both Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar were drunk with their own power, and they undertook to leave God completely out of their lives. The seriousness of the charge which was made against Belshazzar is further seen in the fact that he knew what had happened to his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar: "And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thy heart, though thou knewest all this, but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven." (Dan. 5: 22, 23a.)

The king of Babylon, like all other world rulers, was not satisfied with the *status quo*, but was constantly seeking to conquer and bring into subjection other peoples; and when God's people refused to obey him, he allowed the Chaldeans to take them into captivity. And then when the punishment had been completed, as has already been indicated, the captive people were permitted to return to their homeland. All of this due to the providential workings of Jehovah. The reason why the destruction came upon Babylon was not that it was arbitrarily sent, but because of their own sin. "Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon; sit on the ground without a throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate. ... I was wroth with my people, I profaned mine inheritance, and gave them into thy hand: thou didst show them no mercy; upon the aged hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke. And thou saidst, I shall be mistress for ever; so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end thereof.

"Now therefore hear this, thou that art given to pleasures, that sittest securely, that sayest in thy heart, I am, and there is none else besides me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children: but the two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of chil-

dren, and widowhood; in their full measure shall they come upon thee, in the multitude of thy sorceries, and the great abundance of thine enchantments. For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness; thou hast said, None seeth me; thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thy heart, I am, and there is none else besides me. Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know the dawning thereof: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it away: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou knowest not." (Isa. 47: 1, 6-11.)

When Jeremiah had finished pronouncing Jehovah's judgment upon Babylon, chapters 50 and 51, he instructed the bearer of the message to bind a stone to it, when he had finished reading it, and cast it into the river. "And Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon, even all these words that are written concerning Babylon. And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, When thou comest to Babylon, then see that thou read all these words, and say, O Jehovah, thou hast spoken concerning this place, to cut it off, that none that dwell therein, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever. And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of the Euphrates: and thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise again because of the evil that I will bring upon her; and they shall be weary." (Jer. 51: 60-64.) This no doubt was intended to indicate the sudden destruction of the city—"in a moment in one day"—; and Daniel says, "In that night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old." (Dan. 5: 30, 31; cf. Rev. 18: 21-24.)

### "They Shall Sleep a Perpetual Sleep"

(Jer. 51: 54-58)

*The sound of a cry from Babylon, and of great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans! For Jehovah layeth Babylon waste, and destroyeth out of her the great voice; and their waves roar like many waters; the noise of their voice is uttered: for the destroyer is come upon her, even*

*upon Babylon, and her mighty men are taken, their bows are broken in pieces; for Jehovah is a God of recompenses, he will surely requite. And I will make drunk her princes and her wise men, her governors and her deputies, and her mighty men; and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not awake, saith the King, whose name is Jehovah of hosts. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: the broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly overthrown, and her high gates shall be burned with fire; and the peoples shall labor for vanity, and the nations for the fire; and they shall be weary.*

The *New Bible Dictionary* (Douglas) says that the city of Babylon was surrounded by an intricate system of double walls, the outer range covering seventeen miles, strong and large enough for chariots to pass upon the top, buttressed by defence towers, and pierced by eight gates. The city was no doubt one of the most strongly fortified places in the world; but Jehovah said that the broad walls of Babylon would be utterly overthrown, and her high gates burned with fire. In speaking of the capture of the city, *Smith's History of the Bible* says:

"We learn from other sources that, while the city was sunk in revelry, Cyrus led his army along the empty bed of the Euphrates [this river flowed through the city; and, according to this view, its course had been changed so that the army of Cyrus could enter the city under the wall, that is, through the empty river bed] and entered by the water gates, which it had not been thought worth while to secure. The soldiers fled. The more distant regions of the city were taken and set on fire long before the news reached the palace, perhaps before Daniel had done expounding the writing on the wall. One post ran to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to show the king of Babylon that the city was taken at one end, and that the passages were stopped, and the reeds they had burnt with fire, and the men of war were affrighted."

If modern scholarship is correct in identifying Darius the Mede with Astyages, then it appears almost certain that Cyrus permitted his dethroned predecessor, that is, Darius (Astyages) the last ruler of the Median Empire before it was conquered by

Cyrus, to have the honor of receiving the kingdom of Babylon (Dan. 5: 31); and it further appears from the Book of Daniel that Darius was allowed to reign as supreme king during the remainder of his lifetime. But that Cyrus himself was the real power behind the throne, in the providence of God, may be seen by reading Isa. 45: 1ff. Cyrus was king of

Persia before he conquered the Medes; and with Darius sharing the reign in Babylon, it is easy to see why the second great world power of Dan. 2 was referred to as the Medo-Persian Empire. The fall of Babylon brought to an end the Babylonian Empire, and marked the beginning of the Medo-Persian.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

Why were the people of Judah taken into captivity by the Babylonians?

How do you account for the people's refusal to listen to Jehovah's prophets?

What always happens to people when they refuse to listen to the word of the Lord?

Show that this is especially true in our day.

### The Golden Text

What was Jehovah's providential method of dealing with people in the Old Testament period?

In what sense were wicked nations and kings his servants?

What are God's ultimate aims with reference to the peoples of the earth?

How should Christian people feel regarding the providential guidance of the Lord?

### The Time of Harvest Is Near

What change with reference to Babylon is described in the lesson for today?

Why did Jehovah say he would destroy that city?

What was meant by saying that the time of harvest was near for her?

What lesson should we learn from this for ourselves?

How did Jeremiah and the people of Judah feel about their treatment by the Chaldeans?

What change did the prophet describe with reference to the captive people?

When is it that the Lord can bless his people?

Why is this true?

### The Lord Is the Avenger

What promise did God make to his captive people?

To what condition did he say that he would reduce Babylon?

What do we learn from Daniel's description of the fall of the city?

What was the attitude of the king of Babylon toward the Lord?

What important fact added to his terrible responsibility?

What famous Bible text is illustrated by his conduct?

What was Isaiah's description of the status of the Babylonians?

What instruction did Jeremiah give concerning the message which he sent concerning Babylon?

What reference is made to this in the New Testament?

### "They Shall Sleep a Perpetual Sleep"

What do you know about the fortifications of the City of Babylon?

What famous river flowed through the city?

What strategy was employed in taking the city?

What was probably taking place in the palace at the time of its capture?

Describe the activities of the messengers and the soldiers.

Who were Cyrus and Darius?

Why was Darius apparently allowed to receive the kingdom?

How do we know something of the role which Cyrus played during the time?

How did all of this fit in with Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream?

## Lesson VIII—August 23, 1964

# EZEKIEL'S CALL AND COMMISSION

## Lesson Text

Ezek. 2: 1-10

1 And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak with thee.

2 And the Spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet; and I heard him that spake unto me.

3 And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Is-

ra-el, to nations that are rebellious, which have rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me even unto this very day.

4 And the children are impudent and stiff-hearted: I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Je-ho'-vah.

5 And they, whether they will hear,

or whether they will forbear (for they are a rebellious house), yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.

6 And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns are with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house.

7 And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear,

or whether they will forbear; for they are most rebellious.

8 But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that which I give thee.

9 And when I looked, behold, a hand was put forth unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein;

10 And he spread it before me: and it was written within and without; and there were written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them."* (Ezek. 3: 4.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Ezek. 1: 1-28.

## Daily Bible Readings

August 17. M.....	Ezekiel's Call (Ezek. 2: 1-7)
August 18. T.....	Ezekiel's Preparation (Ezek. 3: 4-1)
August 19. W.....	Ezekiel's Vision (Ezek. 1: 4-14)
August 20. T.....	Paul's Call and Commission (Acts 26: 2-23)
August 21. F.....	All Christians Called (2 Thess. 2: 13, 14.)
August 22. S.....	Many Called, Few Chosen (Matt. 22: 1-14)
August 23. S.....	Called to Be Christ's (Rom. 1: 1-7)

TIME.—595 B.C.

PLACE.—By the river Chebar, in the land of the Chaldeans.

PERSONS.—Jehovah and Ezekiel.

## Introduction

There are parts of the Book of Ezekiel which are relatively easy for the average student to grasp; but, taken as a whole, it will have to be admitted that the book is one of the most difficult in all the Bible to understand. In speaking of this part of God's word, Dean Plumptre says, "It may be said, I think, without rashness that for every ten readers of Isaiah, readers who think and love, there are seven readers of Jeremiah, and not more than two or three who turn to Ezekiel with a like spirit of reverential study. In the old lectionary of the English Church, the latter prophet was almost conspicuous by his absence, and there were but fifteen lessons taken from his writings. It is one of the many gains from the new table of lessons that the balance is, in some measure, redressed, and that men are taught not to look on one of the great prophets of the Old Testament as too hard for them to understand or profit by. But it may be questioned how far that lesson has as yet been adequately learned."

"Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the

fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity, the word of Jehovah came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of Jehovah was there upon him." (Ezek. 1: 1-3.) "And it came to pass in the seven and twentieth year, in the first month, the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying. . . (Ezek. 29:17.) The twenty-two years between these two dates, which are the first and the last mentioned in the book, imply that Ezekiel's ministry was at least that long. If the thirtieth year of verse 1, chapter 1, refers to the prophet's age at the time he began his ministry, which is not clear (some Bible students think that the reference is to the age of the Babylon Empire), then we can have some idea about the times during which Ezekiel lived before he was taken into captivity.

But regardless of the identity of the



reference just mentioned, it is reasonable to suppose that Ezekiel was at least a boy during the times when Josiah was engaged in the great reformation, following the discovery of the roll of the law among the rubbish in the temple. (See 2 Chron. 34:lff.) And if this was true, then Ezekiel knew of Josiah's untimely death, as he undertook to stop the march of the Egyptian army across the plains of Armageddon, at Megiddo (2 Kings 23: 29). The people of Judah made Josiah's son Jehoahaz king in his

stead, but he reigned on three months. Pharaoh-necho put him in bonds, and placed his brother Eliakim upon the throne in Jerusalem, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. After a reign of eleven years, Jehoiakim was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin who, after a reign of three months, was taken into Babylonian captivity by Nebuchadnezzar. (Read 2 Kings 23: 30-24: 16.) This apparently was the time when Ezekiel was taken to "the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar."

### The Golden Text

*"And he saith unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with words unto them"*

Ezekiel, like Jeremiah, belonged to the priesthood; and since they both lived in Jerusalem, it is very probable that Ezekiel often had the privilege of hearing Jeremiah preach. Jeremiah was evidently older than Ezekiel, and did most of his prophetic work before the latter began his. Daniel was contemporary with Ezekiel, but they did their work in different localities and under different circumstances. When Jehovah commissioned Jeremiah for his work, he said to him, "Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth" (Jer. 1: 9); but in the case of Ezekiel, a roll of a book was given to him, and he was told to eat it.

Although the people to whom Ezekiel was sent had been taken from their homeland to Chaldea, they were not deprived of many of their liberties. It appears that they were permitted to live normal lives and preserve most of their national traits under the very eyes of their conquerors. "Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders of the captivity, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon, . . . saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all the captivity, whom I have caused to be carried away captive from Jerusalem to 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 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." (Jer. 29: 1-9.)

The false prophets, both in Jerusalem and in Babylon, were predicting that the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar would be broken within two years. Jeremiah said that Hannaniah, one of the false prophets, said to him in the house of Jehovah, in the presence of the priests and of all the people, "Thus speaketh Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of Jehovah's house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried to Babylon: and I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, that went to Babylon, saith Jehovah; for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon." (Jer. 28: 1-4.) Jehovah had specifically said that the stay in Babylon would be seventy years. (See Jer. 29: 10; read chapters 27-29.) It was to counteract such false testimony that Ezekiel was sent to the people who were then in Babylon. Jeremiah was still in Jerusalem, and the last of the captives were yet to be taken to the land of the Chaldeans.

## The Text Explained

### The Prophetic Call and Commission

(Ezek. 2: 1-5)

*And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak with thee. And the Spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet; and I heard him that spake unto me.*

When Ezekiel saw the vision of the Divine glory, he fell upon his face; and it was from that position that he was told to stand upon his feet, in preparation for the message which Jehovah wanted him to hear. The visions which Ezekiel saw in preparation for his prophetic call and commission were (1) that of the four cherubim; (2) that of the four wheels; and (3) that of the Divine glory. Bible students are hopelessly divided as to the meaning and significance of the first two visions, but are fairly well agreed regarding the third. The first two visions are linked together, and many students of the Bible regarding them as picturing the four great empires which are also referred to by Daniel; while others look upon the two scenes as picturing a chariot, fashioned apparently after those which Ezekiel had seen in Babylonia, with the throne of God above it.

But whatever may have been the meaning and significance of the visions just referred to, it is evident that their purpose was to present to the man who was being called to the prophetic office an awe-inspiring vision of the Majestic Glory. This was accomplished by enabling Ezekiel to experience the intense reality of Jehovah and the direct revelation of his will to him. It also appears that the form of the revelation was in keeping with his spiritual development and the mental attitude which was created by the visions which he had seen; or, to state the same thing in another way, the visions which Ezekiel saw prepared him for the message which God had for him. The "Spirit" which entered into him was God's Spirit, and is the same Spirit which is called the *Holy Spirit* in the New Testament. God's Spirit may be referred to as his very life principle and the divine energy by which he always carries on his diverse activities, whether renovating the earth (Gen. 1: 2), striving with mankind,

(Gen. 6: 3), beautifying the heavens (Job 26: 13), or enabling men to speak God's word to others (Acts 2: 4). No man was ever sent of Jehovah to accomplish a work, who was not divinely equipped for it. (cf. Isa. 6: 1ff; John 16: 13; Luke 24: 48, 49; Acts 1:8.)

*And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to nations that are rebellious, which have rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me even unto this very day. And the children are impudent and stiff-hearted: I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear (for they are a rebellious house), yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.*

The expression "son of man" is used with reference to Ezekiel more than ninety times, and its apparent purpose was to impress upon him the fact that he was frail, weak, and mortal. This was evidently also true in the case of Daniel. (Dan. 8:17.) The same expression was also used by Jesus with reference to himself; but since he was God manifested in the flesh, the reference in his case probably was intended to identify himself with his brethren who were purely human beings. When Jehovah addressed Ezekiel as son of man, he evidently wanted him to understand that although he was like other men in and of himself, he was able to speak for God when Jehovah sent him to his rebellious people. (Cf.

2 Cor. 3: 4-6.) While there a miraculous application in the cases of Ezekiel, Paul, and other inspired preachers during Bible times, the same principle (without the miraculous aspect) is likewise applicable to gospel preachers today. They can indeed regard themselves as nothing in God's sight; but when they have the word which God has authorized to be spoken during this age, they can deal with the situations of their day pretty much as a potter handles the clay. (Read Paul's instructions to Timothy and Titus, in the letters which he addressed to them.) The Lord's word will be the standard of judgment in

the last day (cf. John 12: 48-50), and preachers and other Christians will be held responsible if they do not teach the whole truth.

The manner in which the Jewish people are referred to in Ezekiel's call and commission seems to indicate that his message was for all of them, whether in Chaldea or elsewhere; and the term "nations" probably implies that they had, to a large extent, become like the Gentiles. It appears that both the northern and southern kingdoms of God's people were taken into captivity in three stages. In the case of the kingdom of Judah, the first contingent went with Jehoiakim, among whom was Daniel (2 Chron. 36: 5-8; Dan. 1: 1-7); the second group went with Jehoiachin, including Ezekiel (2 Kings 24: 10-16); the third and final carrying away was accomplished when Zedekiah was removed (2 Kings 25: 1-12). There were three months between the first two removings, and eleven years between the second and third. God's purpose in taking the people into captivity was to punish them for their sins, but it is evident that they had not become penitent when Ezekiel was called and commissioned to prophesy among them. The second group had been in Babylon about five years at the time of this lesson. (See Ezek. 1: 2.)

But regardless of the state of one's heart, if the Lord wants his word spoken to him, it is the duty of the messenger to speak it. Many a preacher has doubtless wondered why he is in such an unpromising field and working among people who are so unresponsive to the gospel message; but if he will only remember that God does not require him to be successful, but only faithful! If men are to be judged by the word of God, then they must hear it; and it is not likely that they will do that unless some one declares it unto them. Some one has said that life is a campaign, not a holiday; and it is for that reason that those who have the word of God must endure hardships as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. "And he said unto all, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23.) Cross-bearing is not burden-bearing, that is, the cross which Jesus has in mind does not consist merely in the hard-

ships which come to saint and sinner alike; but rather in those sacrifices which are voluntarily made for the good of others. People can't refuse to bear burdens: they can refuse to bear a cross; but they will, of course, have to answer to God for that refusal. And, too, people can refuse to accept the benefits of cross-bearing; but they will know that a sacrifice has been made for them, that is, they will know it in the judgment day. Rebellion against God cannot ultimately destroy the work of a preacher of his word.

### Caution and Encouragement

(Ezek. 2: 6, 7)

*And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns are with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of nor be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house. And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear; for they are most rebellious.*

The possibilities which Ezekiel had to face have characterized prophets and gospel preachers all down through the ages. When Jesus sent his disciples out under the limited commission, he said, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." (Matt. 10: 16.) Paul entered the wicked city of Corinth with the simple gospel message, "and the Lord said unto Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to harm thee: for I have much people in this city." (Acts 18: 9, 10.) There is always danger in proclaiming the truth to people who are indifferent to or rebellious against it; but there is far more danger in rebelling against God in refusing to speak his word, than there is in facing scornful people with the message of truth. "And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him." (Luke 12: 4, 5.)

There is no better commentary on the portion of the lesson text which

we are now considering than the ministry of the apostle Paul. He was always ready to speak God's word to people in whatever condition he found them, and without regard to their attitude toward it. Attention has frequently been called to Paul's final charge to Timothy; and when one reads that solemn and thought-provoking message, he may be sure that Paul was writing out of the abundance of his own heart. He says, "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.) What can bring more satisfaction to the gospel preacher than the sense of having done the will of the Lord in speaking his word faithfully?

### God's Method of Equipping Ezekiel for His Work (Ezek. 2: 8-10)

*But thou, son of man, hear what I say what I say unto thee; be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that which I give thee. And when I looked, behold, a hand was put forth unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; and he spread it before me: and it was written within and without; and there were written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.*

Any thoughtful person who reads the first three chapters of Ezekiel will readily see that the chapter divisions are very unfortunate. This is particularly true with reference to chapters 2 and 3; for it is obvious that the

last part of chapter 2 is part and parcel of the first part of chapter 3. The two portions of scripture therefore should be read together. The second part is as follows: "And he said unto me, Son of man, eat that which thou findest; eat this roll, and go, speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat the roll. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness." (Cf. Rev. 10: 1-11.)

Many of the prophets of the Old Testament had a memorable experience at that time they were called in their work. Moses, for example, had his burning bush, Amos, his locusts, and Jeremiah, his boiling caldron; but with Ezekiel it was the book. In fact, as this portion of the lesson text suggests, we have here the power of the open book. One has only to look at the great panorama of history in order to see just how powerful the open book has been throughout the ages. Josiah, after the book of the law had been found, began his great reformation; Martin Luther found the Bible in the library at Erfurt and the sixteenth century reformation followed; few books outside the Bible itself have had the influence on religious thinking which John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* still enjoys; and so with many other books which have been and still are kept open. This was pre-eminently true of the book which Ezekiel, saw, ate, and used.

Jehovah reminded Ezekiel of the rebelliousness of the house of Israel, and he also warned him not to be rebellious. Sometimes preachers may think that they are loyal to the truth, if they are not guilty of flagrant transgressions; but it appears that many do not realize that they are rebelling against the Lord when they fail to proclaim his word faithfully. Israel was rebellious because they turned away from that which Jehovah had commanded them; and Ezekiel would have been rebellious if he had failed to speak that which was contained in the book which was given to him. He was commanded to "devour and digest" the book, and it is certain that any gospel preacher today must learn the truth if he is to proclaim it faithfully.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What appears to be the average attitude toward the Book of Ezekiel?  
Why do people generally feel as they do toward it?  
What was the known length of Ezekiel's prophetic ministry?  
Tell something of the earlier life of this prophet.

### The Golden Text

Who was Ezekiel and what was his probable relationship to Jeremiah?  
What was the general condition of the exiles among whom Ezekiel lived?  
What was the probable reason for Ezekiel's prophetic call and commission at this time?  
Why were false prophets so prevalent at that time?  
What had they predicated regarding the captivity of Judah?

### The Prophetic Call and Commission

Why was Ezekiel told to stand upon his feet?  
What visions did he see prior to his call?  
What were the probable meaning and significance of the first two visions?  
What were their evident purpose?  
What effect did these visions have on Ezekiel?  
What Spirit entered into him and why?  
Tell something about the use of the expression "son of man" in the Book of Ezekiel.  
What would Ezekiel himself probably understand by it?  
In what sense are preachers called to the ministry of the word today?  
What effect does the consciousness of such a call have upon faithful gospel preachers?

To whom was Ezekiel sent?  
Why were the Jews probably referred to as "nations"?  
What is known about the carrying away of the people of God into Babylonia?  
What specific obligation rests upon every preacher of the gospel?  
How should they feel about the places in and the conditions under which they must work?  
Why is it so essential to preach the whole truth to the people?

### Caution and Encouragement

Why was it necessary to caution and encourage Ezekiel?  
What is the general teaching of the Bible regarding this question?  
Why is there a danger in preaching the truth to the indifferent and the rebellious?  
What alternatives must every faithful gospel preacher face and why?  
Show how the responsibility of faithful gospel preaching was illustrated by Paul?  
Why did he give his charge to Timothy?

### God's Method of Equipping Ezekiel for His Work

What effect do chapter divisions sometime have on one's understanding of the meaning of a given passage?  
What was the probable reasons for the memorable experiences of some of the prophets?  
What such experience did Ezekiel have and why?  
What great lessons do we learn from the open book?  
Why is the open book so effective?  
What warning did Jehovah give Ezekiel in this connection?  
In what way can a gospel preacher be rebellious against the Lord?  
What is essential to the success of every faithful gospel preacher?

## Lesson IX—August 30, 1964

## EZEKIEL A WATCHMAN

### Lesson Text

#### Ezek. 3: 12-21

12 Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me the voice of a great rushing, saying, Blessed be the glory of Je-ho'-vah from his place.

13 And I heard the noise of the wings of the living creatures as they touched one another, and the noise of the wheels beside them, even the noise of a great rushing.

14 So the Spirit lifted me up, and took me away; and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; and the hand of Je-ho'-vah was strong upon me.

15 Then I came to them of the captivity at Tel-a'-bib, that dwelt by the river Che-bar, and to where

they dwelt; and I sat there overwhelmed among them seven days.

16 And it came to pass at the end of seven days, that the word of Je-ho'-vah came unto me, saying,

17 Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Is'-ra-el: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.

18 When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand.

19 Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

20 Again, when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him

warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteous deeds which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thy hand.

21 Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning; and thou hast delivered thy soul.

**Golden Text.**—“*Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.*” (Mark 13: 33.)

**Devotional Reading.**—Ezek. 3: 1-11

### Daily Bible Readings

August 24. M..... Work of a Watchman (2 Sam. 18: 24-27)  
 August 25. T..... A Sleeping Watchman (Psalm 125: 1-5)  
 August 26. W..... Question to a Watchman (Isa. 21: 1-11)  
 August 27. T..... Watchman on the Walls (Isa. 62: 1-6)  
 August 28. F..... All Are to Watch (Mark 13: 28-37)  
 August 29. S..... Blind Watchmen (Isa. 56: 1-10)  
 August 30. S..... Continually on the Watchtower (Isa. 21: 1-9)

**Time.**—595 B.C.

**Place.**—Tel-abib, by the river of Chebar, in Babylonia (Chaldea).

**Persons.**—Jehovah, Ezekiel, and the people of Israel.

### Introduction

The truth that no one lives to himself, and no one dies to himself (cf. Rom. 14: 7) is eternal, and its application is seen throughout the entire period of Bible history. Responsibility for the welfare of others is one of the cardinal doctrines of the Scriptures from the beginning of Genesis to the close of Revelation; but, in spite of the prominence of this teaching, the sin of social irresponsibility is one of the most common sins of our day. Men and women on every hand, even among the most religious, are seemingly indifferent to the great duties which relates to their fellow men. In the early morning of time, Cain asked, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” But notwithstanding his indifference, Jehovah made him understand, and through him all others who read the Bible, that he did have a responsibility regarding his brother.

Our foreparents were responsible for sin in the human race; and it is for this reason that God has made the human race responsible for the moral and spiritual condition of those within their reach. This is especially true of those who know what God expects of accountable human beings. “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.” (Gal. 6: 1, 2.) But responsibility goes further than restoring the erring; it also includes the watching and the warning in an effort to prevent the erring, both on our own part and that of those about us. Thomas Seeker says that a soul without watchfulness is, like a city without walls, exposed to the inroads of all its enemies. And in the words of John Conybeare, “We ought not to be careless and indifferent about the future. But as there are goods in life possible to be obtained, and evils capable of being avoided, so we should provide ourselves with proper means to obtain the one and escape the other. Watchfulness and industry are natural virtues, and recommended to us by the conduct even of brute creatures. If we neglect our own interest, we deserve the calamities which come upon us; and have no reason to hope for the compassion of others, when we take no care of ourselves.”

But notwithstanding the mutual responsibility of watchfulness, God has made it the special responsibility of some to instruct, encourage, and warn others regarding the great issues of life. All men will either be saved or

lost in keeping with their attitude toward God's will as it applies to them; and he has therefore made those, who are capable of doing so, to be watchmen for others. When Paul addressed the Ephesian elders at Miletus, he 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 that from among your own selves shall men

arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Wherefore watch ye, remembering that by the space of three years I ceased not to admonish every one night and day with tears." (Acts 20; 28-31.) "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief: for this were unprofitable for you." (Heb. 13: 17; cf. Ezek. 33: 1-9; 2 Tim. 4: 1-5; Rev. 3: 1-3.)

### The Golden Text

***"Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is."*** These words were spoken by Jesus at the close of one of his discourses to some of his disciples. He had just told them that no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but only the Father, knew when the final day of the world would come. The full context of his exhortation to his disciples is as follows: "Take heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. It is as when a man, sojourning in another country, having left his house, and given authority to his servants, to each one his work, commanded also the porter to watch. Watch therefore: for ye know not when the lord of the house cometh, whether at even, or at midnight, or at cockcrowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." (Mark 13: 33-37.)

The "porter" was the doorkeeper, and it was his special duty to watch; but it was also the duty of all the others in the house to see to it that they did their work well. "But concerning the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that aught be written unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. When they are saying, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and

they in no wise escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief: for ye are all sons of light, and sons of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober." (1 Thess. 5: 1-6.) "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all that ye do be done in love." (1 Cor. 16: 13, 14.)

The term "watch," as used in the passages just quoted, means, according to Thayer, to give strict attention to, be cautious, active; or, to state the same things in another way, it means to stay awake, keep your eyes open, be on guard. Furthermore, if it is the duty of the "porter" to watch, it is the obligation of those within the house to listen to his warning. Or to drop the figure, if it is the responsibility of men to preach the gospel, it is equally the obligation of those who hear to give heed to that which is spoken. "And he said unto them, 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.) "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come." (Matt. 24: 14.) "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my gospel, by Jesus Christ." (Rom. 2: 16.)

### The Text Explained

#### Preparation for the Work

(Ezek. 3: 12-15)

*Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I*

*heard behind me the voice of a great rushing, saying, Blessed be the glory of Jehovah from his place. And I*

*heard the noise of the wings of the living creatures as they touched one another, and the noise of the wheels beside them, even the noise of a great rushing. So the Spirit lifted me up, and took me away; and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; and the hand of Jehovah was strong upon me. Then I came to them of the captivity at Tel-abib, that dwelt by the river Chebar, and to where they dwelt; and I sat there overwhelmed among them seven days.*

After Ezekiel had eaten the roll of the book which was given to him, which was a symbol of the method by which God's word was communicated to him; or, as we would say, After he had devoured the book, Jehovah said to him, "Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and of a heard language, but to the house of Israel; not to many peoples of a strange speech and of a hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, if I sent thee to them, they would hearken unto thee. But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are of a hard forehead and of a stiff heart. Behold, I have made thy face hard against their faces, and thy forehead hard against their foreheads. As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house. Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thy heart, and hear with thine ears. And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." (Ezek. 3: 4-11.)

The words just quoted enable us to have some idea of the attitude of the people to whom the prophet was sent, and the tremendous obligation which was laid upon him. With these facts in mind, it is easy to see why Ezekiel needed special preparation for the task which was before him. We should not, however, get the idea that the work which God gave Ezekiel to do was unique in its character; for the same difficult situations are pres-

ent today, and the need for the same type of courage on the part of the faithful proclaimers of God's word to his people. (Read the second chapter of 2 Peter and the Epistle of Jude.) These Old Testament lessons will be especially profitable to us, if we remember that they have been recorded, not only as actual facts, but also for our benefit. (Cf. Rom. 15: 4; 1 Cor. 10: 6, 11.)

If the living creatures and the wheels (see also Ezek. 1: 4-21) refer to the throne-chariot, which appears more reasonable than to make them refer to the four world-empires, then the Spirit probably lifted him up and, along with the chariot, took him to the place where his work was to be done. (Cf. Acts 8: 39.) The benediction which was ascribed to Jehovah "from his place" would either be from heaven, or, as in Ezek. 1: 22-28, from above the firmament which was over the heads of the living creatures. The voices which uttered this benediction may have been those of the living creatures, and its purpose was to proclaim the praises of God in all of his dealings with his people, whether with reference to his justice and mercy, or his grace and providence.

We are not told why Ezekiel went in bitterness, that is, in the heat of his spirit, but it may have been because of the sadness which was his as the messenger of doom to a rebellious people; or, as Adam Clarke has it, "Being filled with indignation at the wickedness and obstinacy of my people, I went, determined to speak the word of God without disguise, and to reprove them *sharply* for their rebellion; and yet I was greatly distressed because of the heavy message which I was commanded to deliver." And then, commenting on the overwhelming silence of seven days, Clarke continues, "Perhaps God kept him all this time without an immediate revelation, that the *bitterness* and *heat of spirit* of which he speaks above might be *subdued*, and that he might speak God's words in God's own Spirit. Had he gone in a better spirit he had probably been employed in his work as soon as he had gained the place of labor." But whatever may have been the attitude of the prophet, he was overwhelmed regarding something, and did not utter a word, so far as the record goes, for



seven days. (Cf. Gen. 50: 10; Job 2: 13.) The people to whom Ezekiel was sent were probably those who were brought from Judah and Jerusalem, along with Jehoiachin, although it is possible that they may have been some of those who were brought earlier, along with Jehoiakim, or even of the people of the northern kingdom who had been in that general area for more than hundred and thirty years. (See 2 Kings 17: 1-6.)

Regarding the Wicked  
(Ezek. 3: 16-19)

*And it came to pass at the end of seven days, that the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.*

Although Ezekiel was sent to the people in general who lived at Tel-abib, it is clear from this section of the lesson text that his responsibility was extended to include individuals. Every person is responsible for his own actions; and Ezekiel was accountable, at the risk of his own life, for the faithful deliverance of God's message, but not for its success or failure. This is a lesson which every gospel preacher and church leader should learn well. No one is commanded to be successful, but he is required to be faithful, even to the point of suffering and death. Every person who enlists in the armed forces of his country is obligated to serve where the commander-in-chief deems wise, and just so with those who are enrolled in the army of the Lord. They must serve where he, in his providential guidance, places them. "But thanks be unto God, who always leadeth us in triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest through us the savor of his knowledge in every place. For we are a sweet savor of Christ unto God, in them that are saved, and in them that perish; to the

one a savor from death unto death; to the other a savor from life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? 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: 14-17.)

A classic example of a servant of God warning the wicked is found in Acts 24: 24-27: "But after certain days, Felix came with Drusilla, his wife, who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ Jesus. And as he reasoned of righteousness, and self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified, and answered, Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call them unto me. He hoped withal that money would be given him of Paul: wherefore also he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. But when two years were fulfilled, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus; and desiring to gain favor with the Jews, Felix left Paul in bonds."

Felix, in all probability, expected Paul to speak on what is usually thought of as the doctrinal side of Christianity, but instead of doing that, he spoke on the practical side, and set forth the kind of life which must be lived if one is to be well pleasing to God. Felix and Drusilla were anything but righteous; they did not practice self-control; and they faced the judgment to come. Paul therefore did not waste any time, but came immediately to that which Felix and Drusilla needed. It is true that Paul had to suffer for the manner in which he dealt with the situation before him; but he loved the souls of men, even those who held him in prison; and he was determined to please God and do what he could for the salvation of the lost. One of the conditions of discipleship, as stated by Jesus himself, is, "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 word for "hateth" in this passage does not mean to love less, as in Matt. 10: 34-37; but rather to oppose anything in our loved one and in ourselves which is contrary to the will and way of Christ. To warn those

who are not faithful to the Lord is to love them in the true sense of the word.

### And the Righteous

(Ezek. 3: 20, 21)

*Again, when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling-block before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteous deeds which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thy hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning; and, thou hast delivered thy soul.*

This is one of the many passages in the Bible which plainly teach that it is possible for a righteous man to fall from the favor of God, to the extent that he will finally be lost. Peter, in speaking of this same situation says, "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: 20-22.)

When the Bible says that God lays a stumbling-block before some one, the idea is that he permits such a person to be tried. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man: but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death." (James 1: 13-15.) "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.) "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: 11.) "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Pet. 3:9; cf. 1 Tim. 2: 3, 4.)

Ezekiel could deliver his soul with reference to those to whom he was sent, only speaking that which God authorized him to say, that is, by giving the warnings which, if heeded, would result in the salvation of the person in question. And what was true of Ezekiel is also true of any child of God who knows the truth and fails to warn others of their evil ways. When Paul addressed the Ephesian elders at Miletus, he said, "Ye yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, after what manner I was with you all the time, serving the Lord with all lowliness of mind, and with tears, and with trials which befell me by the plots of the Jews; how I shrank not from declaring unto you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly, and from house to house, . . . Wherefore I testify unto you this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God." (Acts 20: 18b-20, 26, 27; cf. 18: 5, 6.)

Thus, as David Thomas so well points out, preaching may involve the contraction of enormous guilt, either on the part of the preacher, the hearer, or both. The preacher who makes an unfaithful representation of the gospel, contracts guilt in every discourse (cf. Gal. 1: 6-10; and the hearer who rejects the overtures of redemptive mercy, increases his condemnation. But the preacher who faithfully discharges his mission clears himself from any guilt which may have been contracted by those who hear and know the truth. This is true because he does not study to know what is agreeable to the prejudices of those who hear him, or whether his message is palatable or popular; but his sole aim is to proclaim that which is essential to salvation. If there is blood therefore, it is not on his head, but on the heads of those who reject his message.

Blessed is the preacher who, at the close of his ministry—"this day"—

can say, "I am pure from the blood of all men."

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Why is the question of responsibility so important?  
Why is there so much indifference manifested regarding the subject?  
What are some of the things for which all Christians are responsible?  
Discuss the responsibility of a watchman?  
Who are especially charged with the responsibility of watchfulness?  
What important statement did Paul make regarding the question?  
What is said about elders who watch for the souls of the flock?

### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of this text spoken?  
Who was the porter and what were his duties?  
What does the Bible teach regarding the second coming of Christ?  
What are Christians continually exhorted to do?  
What is the meaning of the term "watch"?  
What responsibilities do gospel preachers and those who hear have?

### Preparation for the Work

What experiences did Ezekiel have, leading up to the lesson for today?  
What made his task a difficult one?  
Why were the people of Israel so hard-hearted?  
In what way did Jehovah prepare Ezekiel for his work?

What lesson do we learn from all of this for our day?  
What is the special value of the Old Testament to us?  
What benediction was ascribed to Jehovah and why?  
What did the Spirit do for Ezekiel?  
What spirit characterized Ezekiel when he went to Tel-abib?  
What was his probable reason for that attitude?  
Why did he remain silent for seven days?  
Who were the people to whom he was sent?

### Regarding the Wicked

What do we learn about personal responsibility in this section of the lesson text?  
For what was Ezekiel responsible?  
What is the lesson in this for us?  
What does it mean for one to be faithful in discharging his responsibility?  
What do we know of Paul in this respect?  
Why did Paul preach as he did to Felix and Drusilla?  
What condition of discipleship did Jesus emphasize regarding one's family and himself?

### And the Righteous

What important lesson do we learn from this section of the lesson text?  
What does Peter say regarding those who return to the ways of sin?  
In what sense does Jehovah lay a stumblingblock before the backslider?  
What is God's attitude toward all lost people?  
How alone can the gospel preacher deliver his soul?  
Discuss the great responsibility which always rests upon the preacher and his hearers.

## Lesson X—September 6, 1964

# EZEKIEL DENOUNCES THE FALSE PROPHETS

## Lesson Text

Ezek. 13: 1-7, 17-19, 22, 23

1 And the word of Je-ho'-vah came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Is'-ra-el that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own heart, Hear ye the word of Je-ho'-vah:

3 Thus saith the Lord Je-ho'-vah, Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing

4 O Is'-ra-el, thy prophets have been like foxes in the waste places.

5 Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither built up the wall for the house of Is'-ra-el, to stand in the battle in the day of Je-ho'-vah.

6 They have seen falsehood and lying divination, that say, Je-ho'-vah

saith; but Je-ho'-vah hath not sent them: and they have made men to hope that the word would be confirmed.

7 Have ye not seen a false vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, in that ye say, Je-ho'-vah saith; albeit I have not spoken?

17 And thou, son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, that prophesy out of their own heart; and prophesy thou against them,

18 And say, Thus saith the Lord Je-ho'-vah: Woe to the women that sew pillows upon all elbows, and make kerchiefs for the head of per-

*sons of every stature to hunt souls! Will ye hound the souls of my people, and save souls alive for yourselves?*

19 And ye have profaned me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hearken unto lies.

. . . . .

22 Because with lies ye have grieved the heart of the righteous, whom I have not made sad, and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, and be saved alive;

23 Therefore ye shall no more see false visions, nor divine divinations; and I will deliver my people out of your hand; and ye shall know that I am Je-ho'-vah.

**Golden Text.**—"Because ye have spoken falsehood, and seen lies, therefore behold, I am, against you, saith the Lord Jehovah (Ezek. 13: 8.)

**Devotional Reading.**—Ezek. 13: 8-16.

## Daily Bible Readings

August 31. M..... Jesus Warns of False Prophets (Matt. 7: 1-15)  
 September 1. T..... False Prophets to Arise (Matt. 24: 1-11, 24)  
 September 2. W..... Signs, Wonders of False Prophets (Mark 13: 19-23)  
 September 3. T..... Warning Regarding False Prophets (Luke 6: 20-26)  
 September 4. F..... False Prophets Among the People (2 Pet. 2: 1-22)  
 September 5. S..... Prophecies of False Visions (Jer. 14: 1-14)  
 September 6. S..... Conditions When Ezekiel prophesied (Ezek. 14: 1-5)

**Time.**—594 B.C.

**Place.**—By the Chebar in Chaldea.

**Persons.**—Jehovah, Ezekiel, and the people of Israel.

## Introduction

We saw, during our studies in Jeremiah, how that prophet had to contend with false prophets throughout his career; and now the same situation confronts his younger contemporary Ezekiel. If the twelfth and thirteenth chapters of Ezekiel are read together, it will be seen that in chapter twelve Ezekiel denounces the false expectations of the people who were yet in Jerusalem and Judea, while in chapter thirteen he denounces the false prophets and prophetesses who raised those expectations, by flattering the people in the midst of their sin and danger with false hopes of peace and security. Jeremiah had, in a letter which he sent from Jerusalem to the captives in Babylon, told of these very things; and now Ezekiel, who was among the captives, was called upon to confirm that which Jeremiah had written. (See Jer. 29:1ff.) In other words, Ezekiel was endeavoring to get his brethren to see that those still in Judea would be much better off, if they would submit to the chastisement of the captivity, than to continue their rebellious attitude in the land of their fathers. (Cf. Jer. 21: 8-10; 38: 17-23; Heb. 12: 5-13.)

False prophets and false teachers

have presented a problem for the Lord's people all down through the centuries. "But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers, who shall privily bring in destructive heresies, denying even the Master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their lascivious doings; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And in covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose sentence now from of old lingereth not, and their destruction slumbereth not." (2 Pet. 2: 1-3.) The work of false prophets is dramatized in the twenty-second chapter of 1 Kings, which should be carefully read. A modern-day example of the "feigned words" which are employed by false teachers in our day may be seen by reading the following question and answer.

"I became a Christian through reading the New Testament. Is it necessary for me to join a church?"

"You have made a wonderful start, and your being converted through reading the New Testament is living proof that the word of God is quick and powerful.

"If you will continue to read the New Testament you will find that Christian conversion finds fulfillment in church membership. In the second chapter of Acts we read: 'Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.' Conversion, after receiving the Word, was followed by the obedience of baptism, and uniting with other believers. The New Testament knows nothing of the solitary Christian. Just as our physical existence is enhanced by family life, so our spiritual lives are enriched by fellowship with other believers.

As to the matter of which church you should join, my advice would be to find a group of believers who have believed and received the Word of God; who depend upon the Holy Spirit; and who by life and walk give evidence that they have been

with Jesus. I'm sure that you will find such a church, and that your life will be enriched by joining it."

There is enough truth in the answer given above to cause such a person to fail to see that the same process which makes one a Christian, also makes him a member of the Lord's church (Acts 2: 47); or, to state the same thing in another way, by citing the Scriptures themselves, the querist is led to believe that he is correct in assuming that becoming a Christian and "joining" a church are two entirely different experiences. Denominationalism is made to appear to be part and parcel of New Testament Christianity, and as long as people are made to feel that way about the matter, they are going to continue to think that they can be saved without obeying the gospel of Christ. (Cf. Mark 16: 15, 16; John 6: 44, 45; Rom. 1: 16, 17; 10: 1-3; 2 Thess. 1: 7-9.)

### The Golden Text

***"Because ye have spoken falsehood, and seen lies, therefore behold, I am against you, saith the Lord Jehovah "***

While a falsehood, as we use the term, does not necessarily have all the characteristics of a lie, they are, nevertheless, very close synonyms; but in the text now before us, it is evident that the two words are used interchangeably. Strictly speaking, a lie implies a flat and unquestioned contradiction of the truth, with an intent to deceive; whereas, a falsehood is a statement or declaration which does not conform to the truth. A falsehood, as we have already seen, may contain much of the truth, but the error which it also contains is so interwoven with the truth, as to produce an entire different impression: from that which the truth alone would leave. But so far as the practical result is concerned, the falsehood is a lie, that is, a contradiction of the truth.

The Judaizers of Paul's day, for example, accepted the basic truths of Christianity, that is, they were willing to and did become Christians; but they also regarded the teaching of Christ as being somewhat of an extension of the law of Moses, which was to say that the two systems should be combined and taken together. But Paul's purpose throughout the Galatian letter was to show

that for one to attempt to be justified by the law of Moses, was to nullify all that Christ stood for. "I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." (Gal. 1: 6, 7; cf. 2: 21; 5: 4.)

Goodspeed renders the passage just quoted in these words: "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 to turn the good news of Christ around." A common example of this practice in our day may be seen by comparing the two following statements. (1) "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned." (Mark 16: 16.) (2) "He that believeth is saved. He may be baptized later, if he so desires; but he is saved before and without water baptism." (The teaching of men.) The order in the first statement is belief, baptism, salvation; while in the second the order is belief, salvation, with baptism as an optional matter. Although the second statement contains all the elements of the first, they

are so "turned" as to make the second statement a flat contradiction of the

first, and is therefore both a falsehood and a lie. (Cf. 2 John 9.)

## The Text Explained

The Word Regarding False Prophets  
(Ezek. 13: 1-7)

*And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say unto them that prophesy out of their own heart, Hear ye the word of Jehovah: Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!*

In speaking of the prophets who prophesy out of their own hearts, Adam Clarke says, "They have their mission from their own *assumption*, and proceed in it from their own *presumption*. Such either go off *themselves*, or are sent by *men*. Such prophets, ministers, preachers, and clergy have been a curse to the Church and to the world for some thousands of years." But the question with us is, How can one tell the difference between true and false teachers of God's word? Christ gives the answer when he says. "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? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them." (Matt. 7: 15-20.)

The "fruits" of a teacher, either true or false, can only be seen in the results which follow his work. If he teaches the truth, that is, if he teaches that which is set forth in the New Testament, the result will be greater respect for the things which are written, and a greater determination to obey that which is contained in the Sacred Scriptures. And on the other hand, those who teach their own ideas, the theories of others, and who mix truth with error, will have as their portion disciples who are content to do those things which are not authorized by the word of the Lord. "They are of the world: there-

fore 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: 5, 6.)

After giving the warning regarding false prophets, Jesus continues: "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.) The term "iniquity," according to Thayer, describes "the condition of one without law—either because ignorant of it, or because violating it." (Cf. Luke 12: 47, 48.) A worker of iniquity, then, is not only one who performs wicked deeds, but also one who attempts to serve the Lord in an unauthorized manner, whether it be with reference to the motive or to the thing actually done. For example, if one should preach salvation by faith only, he is doing something for which he has no divine authority, and is therefore a worker of iniquity, or, which is the same thing, a false teacher. (Cf. Mark 16: 15, 16; James 2: 14-26.)

*O Israel, thy prophets have been like foxes in the waste places. Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither built up the wall for the house of Israel, to stand in the battle in the day of Jehovah. They have seen falsehood and lying divination, they say, Jehovah saith; but Jehovah hath not sent them: and they have made men to hope that the word would be confirmed. Have ye not seen a false vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, in that ye say, Jehovah saith; albeit I have not spoken?*

The cunning manner in which foxes obtain their food, especially where it is not plentiful, has long been proverbial; and so, the prophets of Israel are represented as getting

their prey in a similar manner, that is, by subtlety, and then running to the desert to hide both it and themselves. (Cf. Sol. 2: 15.) And, too, instead of repairing the gaps in the wall of the city, which were brought on by the sins of the people, these false prophets were leaving the place exposed to more and greater danger by their failure to call the people to repentance. The "foxes" and the "gaps," of course, were used in figurative senses.

The sad thing about the whole situation was that these false prophets were encouraging the people to hope for that which could not be realized. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel had repeatedly told the people that the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed and the people themselves taken into captivity, if they did not change their ways; but these false prophets had continued to lead their rebellious brethren to hope that their word, rather than that of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, would be confirmed. This same principle is in evidence everywhere today. Instead of relying upon the plain and unmistakable teaching of the Scriptures for instruction regarding salvation from alien sins, and living the Christian life, preachers continue to tell their hearers that they can be saved by faith only, saved out of the church as well as in it, and that water baptism has no place in the Lord's plan in salvation. (Cf. James 2: 24; Acts 4: 12; Eph. 1: 22, 23; 5: 23; Gal. 3: 26, 27.) They also teach that it is not necessary for the Lord's people to assemble around his table each Lord's day for the purpose of eating his supper, and that they have the scriptural right to add mechanical instrumental music, and other things which the Lord has in no sense authorized, to their worship. (Cf. Acts 20: 7; 1 Cor. 16: 1, 2; 2 John 9; Mark 7: 5-13.)

Furthermore, these false teachers continue to tell the people that they are speaking the word of the Lord. They will quote a passage here and there, sometimes out of context, and often when the passage is only a part of the full revelation on the subject in question, and thereby encourage the hearers to rely upon what appears to be the truth, when, as a matter of fact, their teaching contains such a mixture of truth and error as to deceive any person who does not

think for himself. An example of this may be seen in Paul's answer to the jailor's question, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" The average denominational preachers will quote these words: "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house," and then leave the impression that the whole truth on the subject has been stated. They seldom, if ever, call attention to the fact that Paul spoke unto him the word of the Lord, with all that were in his house, thereby making it possible for him to believe (cf. Rom. 10: 17). And, too, they usually do not tell of the jailor's washing their stripes, indicative of a change of mind (repentance) on his part (cf. Acts 16: 23, 24), and of his and his household's baptism, which was in keeping with the commission under which the apostles were preaching (Mark 16: 15, 16); to say nothing of quoting verse 34 which tells *when* they believed, this is, after their faith, repentance, and baptism. (See Acts 16: 19-34.)

Woe Pronounced against False  
Prophetesses  
(Ezek. 13: 17-19)

*And thou, son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, that prophesy out of their own heart; and prophesy thou against them, and say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Woe to the women that sew pillows upon all elbows, and make kerchiefs for the head of persons of every stature to hunt souls! Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and save souls alive for yourselves? And ye have profaned me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hearken unto lies.*

The Bible speaks of several prophetesses who were evidently genuine, and who were recognized as such by the Lord. (Cf. Ex. 15: 20; Judges 4: 4; Kings 22: 14; Isa. 8: 3; Luke 2: 36; Acts 21: 8, 9; 2: 17.) It was no doubt because of these genuine prophetesses that the spurious prophetesses sought to ply their trade. It is a well known fact that false religions in various ages of the world have come into being, largely through the efforts of women. (Cf. Christian Science and Seventh-Day Adventism,

for example.) It was a time of national crisis when the false prophetesses of the lesson text were active, and they were accused by Jehovah of employing magical practices which were in complete opposition to the higher spiritual religion which belonged to the people of the Lord, as given by Moses.

The "pillows" which they sewed were either cushions upon which they rested their elbows, or bands for their arms (Bible students are not agreed regarding the meaning of the original); while the "kerchiefs" were probably some kinds of magical veils which they put upon the heads of the people who consulted them, as if to prepare them for receiving a response which could come to them, only if they were rapt in spiritual trance above the world. The whole purpose, of course, was to deceive and try to get the people to seek refuge, not in the realities of life, but in the false hopes which were held out to them. It was in this way that the false prophetesses sought the souls of men.

The problem of alluring unsteadfast souls was not limited to the Old Testament period, as may be seen by reading such passages as 2 Tim. 3: 6; 2 Pet. 2: 14. This last passage says, "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; enticing unsteadfast souls; having a heart exercised in covetousness; children of cursing." The false prophetesses of the lesson now before us profaned the name of Jehovah among his people by making his name the cloak under which they performed their wicked deeds. And, too, as the people about whom Peter speaks, their hearts were exercised in covetousness. "And in covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you." (2 Pet. 2: 3) The wicked women of the text were either receiving handfuls of barely and pieces of bread from the people, as a kind of "fee" for their services; or were using such in their divinations as means of enticement. But whichever was the

practice, the purpose was to gain the souls of men for their purposes.

### The Judgment against Them

(Ezek. 13: 22, 23)

*Because with lies ye have grieved the heart of the righteous, whom I have not made sad, and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, and be saved alive; therefore ye shall no more see false visions, nor divine divinations; and I will deliver my people out of your hand; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah.*

The spurious prophetesses would certainly come to the end of their way. They were causing the destruction of those who should not have been destroyed, and were saving alive those who should have been destroyed; but, to use the words of Peter, "their sentence now from of old lingereth not, and their destruction slumbereth not." (Read also Ezek. 13: 20, 21.) Not only were these false prophetesses corrupting the righteous; they were also encouraging the wicked not to turn from their evil ways. The result, of course, would be the condemnation of both the people and the prophetesses, unless the hand of the Lord intervened.

The same sad situation prevails today. Religious teachers are continuously telling their hearers that they do not need to follow the strict pattern of the New Testament, regarding the matter of obedience to the Lord; but that they can be saved according to the various teaching of men; and to make matters worse, they quote the Lord as endorsing that which they are advocating. The result is that many sincere souls allow themselves to be led astray; and many who are in the wrong way are encouraged to remain there. Those who manifest the right attitude toward the Lord and his word are enabled to recognize the truth, but alas! there are so many who do not stop to think for themselves; they prefer to listen to others. (Cf. John 7: 17; Acts 17: 10-12.)

### Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

#### Introduction

Why was the problem caused by false prophets and prophetesses so great in Ezekiel's day?

Give a resume of the teaching of the Bible regarding false teachers and prophets.

Why are they so successful in our day?

Why do they employ "feigned words" with reference to the people?

What is the effect of mixing truth with error?



## The Golden Text

How are falsehoods and lies related to each other?

When does a falsehood become a lie?

How did Paul deal with problem in his day?

In what way do we see the practice of deception repeated over and over in our day?

What specific teaching does John give regarding the question of going beyond the teaching of Christ?

## The Word Regarding False Prophets

How can one tell the difference between true and false teachers of the word of God?

What are the "fruits" of teachers?

What criterion does John give regarding this question?

How does Jesus illustrate his warning concerning false prophets?

Who is a worker of iniquity?

What figures of speech did Ezekiel use with reference to false prophets?

What use do spurious teachers make of the subject of hope?

What application does the subject have for our day?

How do false teachers enforce their erroneous teaching?

Illustrate this in the case of Paul and the Philippian jailor?

## Woe Pronounced against False Prophetesses

What do we learn from the Bible regarding genuine prophetesses?

What part have women had in the establishment of false religions?

What devices did the prophetesses of Ezekiel's day employ?

What was the purpose which actuated them in their work?

What does the New Testament teach with reference to the alluring of unsteadfast souls?

In what way do false teachers profane the name of Jehovah?

Why do they want to use his name in their teaching?

## The Judgment against Them

What did Jehovah say to the false prophetesses?

Why is their condemnation certain?

What did God say that they were doing to his people?

Show how they corrupted the righteous and strengthened the wicked?

Explain how the same situation prevails in our day.

Why are so many sincere people led astray?

Are they the helpless victims of erroneous teaching? Give reasons for your answer.

In what way are the disobedient encouraged to remain in their disobedience?

How do we know that we can determine the difference between right and wrong?

## Lesson XI—September 13, 1964

## PROMISE OF A NEW HEART

## Lesson Text

Ezek. 36: 25-38

25 And I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.

27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep mine ordinances, and do them.

28 And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

29 And I will save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the grain, and will multiply it, and lay? no famine upon you.

30 And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye may receive no more the reproach of famine among the nations.

31 Then shall ye remember your evil ways, and your doings that were not good; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.

32 Not for your sake do I *this*, saith the Lord Je-ho'-vah, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Is'-ra-el.

33 Thus saith the Lord Je-ho'-vah: In the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be builded.

34 And the land that was desolate shall be tilled, whereas it was a desolation in the sight of all that passed by.

35 And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.

36 Then the nations that are left

round about you shall know that I, Je-ho'-vah, have builded the ruined places, and planted that which was desolate: I, Je-ho'-vah, have spoken it, and I will do it.

37 Thus saith the Lord Je-ho'-vah: For this, moreover, will I be inquired of by the house of Is'-ra-<sup>el</sup>, to do it

for them: I will increase them with men like a flock.

38 As the flock for sacrifice, as the flock of Je-ru'-sa-lem in her appointed feasts, so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men; and they shall know that I am Je-ho'-vah.

**GOLDEN TEXT.**—*"Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new"* (2 Cor. 5: 17.)

**DEVOTIONAL READING.**—Ezek. 36: 1-24.

## Daily Bible Readings

September 7. M..... Shepherds of Israel Condemned (Ezek. 34: 1-10)  
 September 8. T..... Jehovah to Shepherd His People (Ezek. 34: 11-16)  
 September 9. W..... A Covenant of Peace (Ezek. 34: 25-31)  
 September 10. Th..... A Promise of Blessing (Ezek. 36: 1-7)  
 September 11. F..... Fruitfulness and Abundance (Ezek. 36: 32-38)  
 September 12. S..... A New Heart and Spirit Promised (Ezek. 11: 14-21)  
 September 13. S..... Hard Hearts Will Not Hear (Zech. 7: 8-14)

**TIME.**—587 B.C.

**PLACE.**—By the Chebar in Chaldea.

**PERSONS.**—Jehovah, Ezekiel, and the people of Israel.

## Introduction

When Solomon said, "Keeping thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life," he was speaking an eternal truth. What he said was true in his day; it had always been true; and it will always be true. This is true, first and foremost, because of what the heart is. When we think of the physical being, we think of the heart, not only as the center of our being, but also as the organ which is responsible for the distribution of the blood, without which life would not be possible. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood." (Lev. 17: 11.) And then, by means of a metaphor, we can easily see why the center of our moral and spiritual being is also called the heart. As from the fleshly heart goes forth the blood in which is the animal life, just so from the spiritual heart goes forth all our mental and moral activities.

The spiritual heart is the source of all our intellectual, emotional, volitional processes, as well as those of the conscience. For convenience's sake and in order to make it easier for us to grasp the idea, the functions of the spiritual heart may be listed in the four following categories, namely, (1) think (Matt. 9: 4; Heb. 4: 12), reason (Mark 2: 8), understand (Matt. 13: 15), and believe (Rom. 10: 9, 10). These are purely intellectual processes. (2) Love (Matt. 22: 37),

despise (2 Sam. 6: 16), rejoice (Psalm 33: 21), suffer anguish (2 Cor. 2: 4), and may be stolen (2 Sam. 15: 1-16). These are emotional processes. (3) Purposes (Acts 11: 23; 2 Cor. 9: 7), determines (1 Cor. 7: 37), and chooses (Josh. 24: 15). These are volitional processes, or processes of the will. (4) May be pricked (Acts 2: 37), may be cut (Acts 5: 33), and condemns or approves (1 John 3: 20, 21). These are processes of the conscience. As we shall see in this study, all of these processes or functions are involved when one comes into possession of a new or changed heart.

In speaking of the new heart, The Great Texts of the Bible says, "How wonderfully the Book of God proclaims the doctrine of the 'new'! It speaks of a 'new covenant,' and a 'new creature,' and a 'new song': it even asserts that there be 'a new heaven and a new earth.' It proclaims that he that sitteth upon the throne purposes to 'make *all* things new.' It is the unique claim of the gospel that it makes men new. It professes to alter character, not as all other religious and ethical systems in the world have done, by mere influence of reason or of motives, or by a discipline of the flesh; it professes to alter human character by altering human nature [cf. 2 Pet. 1: 4]. It

brings truth, indeed, to satisfy the reason, and powerful motives of every sort to tell upon the will, as well as law to stimulate the conscience; but in the very act of doing so, it pronounces all these external appliances to be utterly insufficient with-

out a concurrent action of God from within the man. The real change it proclaims to be a change of 'heart' or spiritual being; and that is the work of God." It is the aim of this lesson to show how God accomplishes this change of heart.

### The Golden Text

*"Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new"* The marginal reading for "he is a new creature" is *there is a new creation*. It is reasonable to assume that any one who stops to think will readily admit that only God can create something new. Many people are always ready with the blanket statement that all miracles have ceased, but they apparently do not take the passage which serves as the golden text of this lesson into consideration. It is true that the miracles, such as those which were common in Bible times, have ceased (cf. 1 Cor. 13: 8); but, as this text affirms, a miracle is performed every time a redeemed soul is made into a new creature. Human beings can't perform miracles, to be sure; but God can. He lost none of his power when he made it impossible for men to accomplish the miraculous. (Cf. Matt. 19: 25.) A new creation by God is a miracle.

The Twentieth Century New Testament renders the golden text in these words: "Therefore, if any one is in union with Christ, he is a new being! His old life has passed away; a new life has begun!" This is the truth which Jesus attempted to teach Nicodemus, when the latter came to him by night. "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, Verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born anew." (John 3: 3-7.)

The marginal reading of "anew" is *from above*; and if one will read the following passages, where the

original word for "anew" is also found, he will get an idea of what it means to be born anew. (John 3: 31; 19: 11; James 1: 17; 3: 15, 17.) The gospel has been given to show people how to go to God for his mercy (cf. Rom. 1: 16, 17): and when any one meets the conditions set forth therein, a change takes place which is so radical, as to make the man wholly acceptable to God. Two distinct factors are involved in the new birth, namely, water baptism and the Holy Spirit; and when one accepts by faith that which God ordains he is begotten of the Spirit (cf. 1 John 5: 1), and when he is baptized as the word directs (Eph. 5: 26, 27) he becomes a new creature in Christ. This is what Paul means when he says, "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, which he poured out upon us richly, through Jesus Christ our Savior; that, being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to his hope of eternal life." (Tit. 3: 5-7.)

The passage just quoted states the method by which we are made "new creatures" in Christ Jesus; it is "effected," as Thayer notes, "by the Holy Spirit." There is no more mystery about this, than there is about the fact that God forgives sins; both belong to the Divine side. (Cf. Psalm 51: 10; Eph. 2: 10.) It should always be kept in mind that baptism does not impart life. Its function is to deliver the life imparted by the Father into a state or relationship, suited for its growth and development. (Cf. Gal. 3: 26, 27.) Vincent points out that "through *water alone*, the mere external rite of baptism, a man may pass into the outward fellowship of the visible church without seeing or entering the kingdom of God. Through water and the Spirit, he passes indeed into the outward fellowship, but through that into the vision and fellowship of the kingdom of God."

## The Text Explained

### The Regeneration of Israel

(Ezek. 36: 25-31)

*And I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep mine ordinances, and do them.*

The entire thirty-sixth chapter of Ezekiel should be read before attempting to explain the lesson text; and the part of the lesson text just quoted should be considered in the light of the three verses which precede it. "Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: I do not this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for my holy name, which ye have profaned among the nations, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which hath been profaned among the nations, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the nations shall know that I am Jehovah, saith the Lord Jehovah, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations, and gather you out of all the countries, and will bring you into your own land." (Ezek. 36: 22-24.) With this background before us, we are ready to consider the regeneration of Israel, which involved the following:

(1) *"I will sprinkle clean water upon you."* While the primary reference here is to Israel's restoration to their homeland, it is doubtless to the salvation wrought through Christ that the prophecy ultimately looks. (Cf. Jer. 31: 31-34.) However, we must keep in mind the fact that the language used by Ezekiel is based upon that which was authorized by Moses, and has no direct reference to any ordinances of Christ. The "clean water," which was ritualistically used for ceremonial cleansing, is described in the nineteenth chapter of Numbers. It was not "pure water" in the sense that it contained no foreign substances, but was a mixture which was used to sprinkle ceremonially

unclean people and objects, as the law of Moses required.

The expression "I will sprinkle clean water upon you" was evidently used figuratively; and it is certain that there was no reference whatsoever to the baptism which was commanded by Christ. Furthermore, one may search the Scriptures from the first of Genesis to the close of Revelation, and he will not find a single instance of the sprinkling of plain water, such as is found in our streams, wells, and other sources of our domestic supply, on any person, at any time, in any place, or for any purpose. God was telling the people of Ezekiel's day that he would cleanse them from all their idolatry and other sins of unfaithfulness; and it is a fact, worthy of notice, that the Jews, following their exile, never worshipped false gods again. The Seleucid king of Syria, Antiochus Ephiphanes, through an emissary, undertook to force the Jews to offer unlawful sacrifices, and that very act led to the great Maccabean struggle, which was a bitter experience of God's people during the period between the Testaments. (Read the first two or three chapters of 1 Maccabees.)

(2) *A new heart and a new spirit.* If there is any typical import regarding the sprinkling of clean water, it would be in the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus upon the hearts of those who are cleansed from sin in this age of the world. (See Heb. 10: 22; cf. Eph. 5: 25-27.) The cleansing from sin, however, either during the time of Ezekiel or in the Christian dispensation, would not profit for long unless there was or is a change in the inward nature. The reference to the new heart should be read in the light of Ezek. 11: 14-21 18: 25-32; Jer. 31: 31-34. When this is done, it will be seen that man also has a responsibility in getting a new heart and a new spirit. Although Jehovah wants every man to be saved (cf. Ezek. 33: 11; 1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9), it is equally true that he does not save any one against his will, or who will not do his part in the matter of his salvation. (Cf. Eph. 2: 8-10.) When a man does that which God has ordained for him, it is then that God can and will give him a new heart and a new spirit; and that is what is

meant by being a new creature in Christ. (See Rom. 6: 1-11; 2 Cor. 4: 16; Col. 3: 9, 16; Rom. 7: 22.) Human nature can only be changed when one abandons himself (Matt. 16: 24), and becomes a partaker of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1: 3-11).

(3) *"And I will put my Spirit within you."* God's Spirit, frequently referred to in the Old Testament, is his life principle and the power or energy by which his diverse activities are accomplished. The Spirit is never referred to in the Old Testament as the Holy Spirit, with a capital "H." but is frequently so designated in the New Testament. The apparent reason for this is seen in the fact that when the "Word" of God became flesh and appeared in the world as Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God was also personified and given the title of the Holy Spirit. The presence of God's Spirit in people or things always signifies God's approval (cf. Acts 5: 32; 1 Cor. 3: 16, 17; 6: 19, 20); for, since the fall of man, he has never dwelt in any except those who were sanctified. No one, not even the best of people, can live as God would have them live without his help; and it was for that reason that he told the people of our lesson that he would put his Spirit within them. Today people receive the Holy Spirit when they obey the gospel (cf. Acts 2: 38, 39; 5: 32; Gal. 3: 14), and he does for them the following four things, namely, (1) he comforts them—John 14: 16, 17; (2) he helps their infirmity—Rom. 8: 26, 27; (3) he strengthens them with power in the inward man—Eph. 3: 16; and (4) he assists them in bearing the fruit which is well pleasing to God—Gal. 5: 16, 22, 23, 25. It is no more unusual to expect help from the Holy Spirit, than it is to expect assistance from the Father and the Son. (Cf. Matt. 28: 20; Heb. 13: 5, 6; James 1: 5-8.)

*And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. And I will save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the grain, and will multiply it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye may receive no more the reproach of famine among the nations. Then shall ye remember your evil*

*ways, and your doings that were not good; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations.*

Not only did the Lord promise to bless his people spiritually, that is, in forgiving their sins and restoring them to their former relationship with him; he also promised to bless them materially. This has always been true with God, in relationship to his people; and it is still true. (Cf. Rom. 2: 4; Phil. 4: 19.) In speaking of the bountiful blessings which God bestowed on Israel when he led them out of Egypt and on toward Palestine, Moses said, "But Jeshurun [a poetical name for Israel] waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxed fat, thou art grown thick, thou art become sleek; then he forsook God who made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation." (Deut. 32: 15.) But in the case now before us, the people were told that when they were tempted to become proud, they would then remember their former sinful life and loathe themselves. (Cf. 1 Tim. 1: 12-17.)

For Jehovah's Sake and the Effect  
on the Nations  
(Ezek. 36: 32-36)

*Not for your sake do I this, saith the Lord Jehovah, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: In the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be builded. And the land that was desolate shall be tilled, whereas it was a desolation in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited. Then the nations that are left round about you shall know that I, Jehovah, have builded the ruined places, and planted that which was desolate: I, Jehovah, have spoken it, and I will do it.*

There are two important truths in this section of the lesson text which should be impressed upon our minds; and yet they are so closely bound together that it is not practical to try to separate them, and discuss them separately. These two truths are (1) Jehovah's regard for his name, and (2)

the effect which that which he does for his name has on the people who do not serve him. Moses and Joshua frequently pleaded with Jehovah to spare his rebellious people for the sake of his great name. "Oh, Lord, what shall I say, after that Israel hath turned their backs before their enemies! For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it, and will compass us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do for thy great name?" (Josh. 7: 8, 9; cf. Ex. 32: 7-14; Deut. 9: 25-29.)

If we should search the Bible through, we would find that the first and foremost motive which Jehovah had in all of his work was that of his own glory. Even the material creation proclaims his glory (Psalm 19: 1, 2), and his "much-variegated" wisdom is made known through the church (Eph. 3: 10). The psalmist sang, "Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside still waters. He restoreth my soul: he guideth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." (Psalm 23: 1-3.) God made man in his own image (Gen. 1: 27, 31), and he expected that he would serve him (Acts 17: 27, 28); and when man fell into sin and was threatened with everlasting destruction, only an all-wise and benevolent God could devise a plan whereby sinful humanity could be saved (John 17: 1-6).

Anything less than a holy jealousy for his name would be completely unlike God. The Old Testament is full of examples of how people came to recognize the majesty of Jehovah's name. (Cf. Isa. 59: 19; Dan. 3: 29; 6: 25-27.) "For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the Gentiles, saith Jehovah of hosts. But ye profane it, in that ye say, The table of Jehovah is polluted, and the fruit thereof, even its food, is contemptible. Ye say also, Behold, what a weariness it is! and ye have have snuffed at it, saith Jehovah of hosts; and ye have brought that which was taken by violence, and the lame and the sick;

thus ye bring the offering: should I accept this at your hand? saith Jehovah. But cursed be the deceiver, who hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto Jehovah a blemished thing; for I am a great King, saith Jehovah of hosts, and my name is terrible among the Gentiles." (Mal. 1: 11-14.) It is interesting to note that the Hebrew word for "terrible" in this passage is identical with the term which is rendered "reverend" in Psalm 111: 9. Jehovah is going to be both respected and honored by all people of the earth, whether in their salvation or in their destruction. (Cf. 2 Thess. 1: 7-10; Matt. 25: 31-46; Phil. 2: 5-11; Josh. 7: 19.) When people come to realize that their salvation is due, first of all, to God's regard for his name, it is then that they will appreciate it more and work harder for it. (Cf. Acts 15: 14-18.)

### God's Blessings Must Be Desired and Requested

(Ezek. 36: 37, 38)

*Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: For this, moreover, will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them: I will increase them with men like a flock. As the flock for sacrifice, as the flock of Jerusalem in her appointed feasts, so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men; and they shall know that I am Jehovah.*

There were times in the history of Israel when Jehovah would not be inquired of (cf. Ezek. 14: 1-5; 20: 3, 31, 32), and the same is and will be true in the final age of the world (cf. 2 Thess. 2: 8-12). But when people are willing to be taught the will of the Lord, they are always welcome at the throne of mercy. (See Heb. 4: 14-16; Acts 17: 10-12.) The increase in population is compared to the flock of sheep and other animals which were taken to Jerusalem for the annual sacrifices. (Cf. Ezek. 34: 1-31.) Adam Clarke thinks that the things of the chapter we have been considering belong to the Christian dispensation. His words are, "I do not ask my reader's pardon for having considered this most beautiful chapter as relating, not to the restoration from the Babylonish captivity, but to the redemption under the new covenant by Jesus Christ. There is no

period of the Jewish history from that time until now, to which it can

be applied. It must belong to the *Gospel dispensation*;..."

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

Why is this such an important lesson?

Why should the heart be kept with all diligence?

What is the spiritual heart?

How is the heart of man changed?

### The Golden Text

What is true of every person who is in Christ Jesus?

Who alone can bring about this new creation and what does that imply?

What did Jesus say regarding this subject?

What does it mean to be born anew?

How does Paul say that this is accomplished?

### The Regeneration of Israel

Discuss the immediate background of the lesson now before us.

What were the principle things involved in Israel's restoration?

What was "clean water" and why was it sprinkled?

How effective was Israel's cleansing from idolatry?

Why a new heart and a new spirit?

Why is God's Spirit put within his people?

What are some of things which the Spirit does for redeemed people?

To what extent did Jehovah promise to bless his people?

What did he say would keep them from becoming proud again?

How should these facts affect us?

For Jehovah's Sake and the Effect on the Nations

What important lessons should we learn from this section of the lesson text?

Why is Jehovah jealous for his great name?

What great demonstrations has he given regarding this truth?

Discuss some instances of how people came to recognize the greatness of God.

What does God say regarding his name among the Gentiles?

What does it mean to say that his name is "terrible" among the nations?

What effect should all of this have on us as it respects our salvation?

Why did God say that he would call to him a people from among the Gentiles?

### God's Blessings Must Be Desired and Requested

Under what circumstances does God refuse to be inquired of?

How does he feel toward those who are willing to be taught his will?

How can one know that he is willing to be taught the truth of God?

What promise did Jehovah make regarding the increase of his people?

Give reasons for thinking that the facts of this chapter do or do not belong to the Christian dispensation?

What benefit do you receive from studying the Old Testament?

Do you regard this helpful in learning the truth of the New Testament? Give reasons for your answer.

## Lesson XII—September 20, 1964

# EZEKIEL'S VALLEY OF DRY BONES

## Lesson Text

Ezek. 37: 1-10

1 The hand of Je-ho'-vah was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of Je-ho'-vah, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones.

2 And he caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry.

3 And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord Je-ho'-vah, thou knowest.

4 Again he said unto me, Prophecy over these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of Je-ho'-vah.

5 Thus saith the Lord Je-ho'-vah unto these bones: Behold, I will cause

breath to enter into you, and ye shall live.

6 And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am Je-ho'-vah.

7 So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and, behold, an earthquake; and the bones came together, bone to its bone.

8 And I beheld, and, lo, there were sinews upon them, and flesh came up, and skin covered them above; but there was no breath in them.

9 Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the

Lord Je-ho'-vah: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.

10 So I prophesied as he com-

manded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

Golden Text.— *And my servant David shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in mine ordinances, and observe my statutes, and do them.*" (Ezek. 37: 24.)

Devotional Reading.—Ezek. 37: 24-28.

## Daily Bible Readings

September 14. M.....Unfaithfulness of Judah (2 Chron. 16: 1-10)  
 September 15. T.....Jeremiah's Warning (Jer. 26: 1-7)  
 September 16. W.....Wickedness of the People (Ezek. 16: 1-22)  
 September 17. T.....Sins Jehovah Would Not Overlook (2 Kings 24: 1-9)  
 September 18. F.....A Vision of Hope (Ezek. 47: 1-10)  
 September 19. S.....A Glorious Temple, Promised (Ezek. 43: 1-12)  
 September 20. S.....Spiritual Restoration (Psalm 24)

Time.—587 B.C.

Place.—In the valley of dry bones, in Chaldea.

Persons.—Jehovah, Ezekiel, and the people of Israel.

## Introduction

Some one has said that there is perhaps no passage in all the Bible which, for weird imaginative power, surpasses Ezekiel's vision of dry bones. By means which are as simple as simple can be, he transports us into a veritable valley of death, and the gloom and horror of it enter our soul. One only has to read the narrative in order to get some idea of how the prophet himself felt. Like many other visions, before and since, the vision now under consideration was partly shaped by the circumstances of the times. The horrors of Chaldean invasion, which had resulted in the carrying away of the Jewish people into Babylonian captivity, were still fresh in the memories of the people who were with Ezekiel. It is possible that many of the valleys in Palestine were marked by the bones of people who were slain by the invading armies of Babylon; but, whether so or not, the vision which Ezekiel saw cannot be forgotten.

The principal lesson which the vision of dry bones presents, or so it seems, is the struggle between life and death—"life and death in their barest, most glaring contrast; life and death, and the way in which one is to pass the other; life and death, and the huge gulf between them, and how that gulf is to be bridged over; life and death, with their unfathomable mysteries and their world-prevailing power. Life and death! They compass us on every side: witherso-

ever we cast our eyes we see the workings of one or the other; we see them perpetually battling and struggling and wrestling, and now one gains the mastery, now the other." None of us fully understands either of them; and the best we can do, in our human limitations, is to observe the struggle, and trust in the Lord to enable us to accept his way for ourselves.

The Spirit of Jehovah brought Ezekiel out to, and set him down in, a valley of dry bones. They were not skeletons, but rather a mass of disconnected bones. This meant, as we shall see further on this study, that there was no hope for life, so far as those bones were concerned. No prospect therefore for anything better could have been more forlorn or unpromising. There the bones were, a sad emblem of a lifeless and hopeless people. We can, in our imagination, see Ezekiel as the Spirit of Jehovah leads him by the bones round about, and he apparently was the only living man there. Other than very many, we have no way of knowing how many bones were there; but the record tells us that they were very dry, due no doubt to the fact that it had been so long since the warm, living flesh was about them. They were indeed so bleached and wizened as to make it impossible to bring life about them, except by a miracle. This was the impressive vision which Ezekiel had in the valley of dry bones.



## The Golden Text

*"And my servant David shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in mine ordinances, and observe my statutes, and do them."* The fact that "my servant David shall be king over them" makes it certain that the reference is to Christ. (Cf. Ezek. 34: 23; John 10: 14-16.) The last descendant of David to sit upon the throne of Judah, that is, the descendant who was *furthest away from* David in the line of kings which bore his name, was Jehoiachin, also known as Jeconiah and Coniah (see Jer. 22: 24-30). Zedekiah who succeeded Jehoiachin on the throne was a descendant of David, but not Jechoiachin: he was Jehoiachin's uncle and one of the three sons of Josiah (Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah) who sat upon the throne of Judah. Jehoiachin was the son of Jehoiakim. (Read 2 Kings 23: 28-24: 20.)

It was suggested in an earlier lesson that it is very likely that some of the people of the northern kingdom came to Jerusalem with the returning exiles from Judah, and that the reason why the ten tribes *as* such were not restored was those returning from the captivity would constitute a single kingdom, whether they were from the northern or the southern kingdom. The following statement seems to confirm this idea. "The word of Jehovah came again unto me, saying, And thou, *son of man*, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: and join them for thee one to another into one stick, that they may become one in thy hand. And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not show us what thou meanest by these? say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his companions; and I will put them with it, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in my hand. And the sticks

whereon thou writest shall be in thy hand before their eyes. And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, whither they are gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all; neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will save them out of all their dwelling-places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God." (Ezek. 37: 15-23.)

The words which serve as the golden text for today immediately follow these words; and, as has already been pointed out, that is enough to show that the reference is to Christ and the church, and not simply to the earthly kingdom of Israel. Ezekiel, who was taken captive to Babylon along with Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24: 10-16; Ezek. 1: 1-3), in speaking of Zedekiah, said, "But thou, O deadly wicked wounded 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 overturn, overturn, overturn it: this also shall be no more, until he comes whose right it is; and I will give it him." (Ezek. 22: 25-27.) When this statement is read in the light of Daniel 2, it will be seen that the probable meaning of the three-fold *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, even to his Son Jesus Christ, who was also the son of David (Acts 2: 29-36; Matt. 22: 41-46.)

## The Text Explained

### The Prophet's Vision and a Vital Question

(Ezek. 37: 1-3)

*The hand of Jehovah was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of Jehovah, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. And he caused me to pass by them round about; and, behold there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord Jehovah, thou knowest.*

We may look upon the vision of the valley of dry bones as an illustration of the truth that God never abandons a good cause, however dark its prospects may appear at any given time. There are evils in the world so great, as to lead us to think that their cure is utterly impossible. This is indeed a sinful world in which we live, and the best of men and cause are beset with evil; but God knows when and how the difficulties which plague holy enterprises will be cleared away. (Cf. 1 Cor. 10: 13; Phil. 4: 19.) What could appear more hopeless than a valley filled with detached bones, and which were thoroughly dried? But the vision now before us was God's way of assuring his people that their captivity would end, and that they would again be returned to their homeland. (Read verses 11-14.) The Lord's people, all through the ages, have had to face overwhelming odds in doing **the** work which was assigned to **them**; but they have not always done their best to follow the Lord's leading. However, it is a fact capable of demonstration that God has never failed to supply whatever need they **had**, if they were willing to do their **part**. (Cf. Israel's crossing the **Red** Sea and the Jordan; Matt. 28: 20; Phil. 4: 13; Deut. 33: 25.)

But inasmuch as this lesson pertains to the reign of Christ, it will be profitable to us, only as we endeavor to relate the facts of the study to our own lives. Any one who is acquainted with the teaching of the New Testament is familiar with some of the problems which the average congregation faces. This is true, because the problems we have now are substantially the same in principle as

those which characterized the churches of the New Testament period. Some of our problems are, (1) How can all the brethren be brought to acknowledge a common purpose in life? (2) Is it possible for the entire congregation to become a mighty army in Christ? (3) What are the chances of arranging a program of work for the church which will have the endorsement and cooperation of every member of the congregation? (Cf. 1 Cor. 1: 10; 12: 12, 13; Acts 4: 32; 8: 4; Phil. 1: 27.)

The serious-minded Christian will recognize the questions just asked as being both crucial and urgent. If we face them at all, most of us will answer in one of two ways, namely, (1) we yield to despair regarding the church's plight; or (2) we assume an attitude of optimism which usually goes no further than to say that we'll make the effort. It is at this point that vital religion goes deeper than bland optimism or secular despair. Christian faith, with forthright honesty, uncovers the dire condition into which the average congregation has drifted; and at the same time it makes known the Infinite Factor in human affairs which makes all the difference. The principle which underlines our study for today is forcefully illustrated by the lesson text, and the paragraph which follows, that is, verses 11-14. The disconnected and bleached bones which Ezekiel saw represented his confused and lifeless countrymen, who were then in Babylonian captivity. Their doom, from the human point of view, was complete; but when God's power was brought to bear upon the situation, the result was that the bones "lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army."

### The Purpose of the Vision

(Ezek. 37: 4-6)

*Again he said unto me, Prophesy over these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of Jehovah. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah unto these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah.*

It is an easy thing for men to become discouraged, and this apparently was the reason why Ezekiel was permitted to see the valley of dry bones. "Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off." (Ezek. 37: 11.) This attitude is often equally true of Christians today; it is easy for us to lose hope when faith grows dim and the way becomes obscure. The object of the vision of dry bones, however, was not to produce a sense of helplessness, but rather to emphasize the power of God. When Jehovah said to Ezekiel, "Son of man, can these bones live?" the prophet replied, "O Lord Jehovah, thou knowest." That was equivalent to saying that life could come to them only by God's power; for he alone knew whether or not he was willing to make them live.

Another lesson which we should learn from the vision now under consideration is that the power of God is often exerted through human instrumentality. This is seen in the command to Ezekiel to prophesy "over" these bones and "unto" the wind. And just so now, it is God's power which is exerted, but it is applied through the ministry which he authorizes, namely, a ministry which declares that the Lord will do the very thing which men themselves say is impossible. "For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, and giveth seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Isa. 55: 10, 11.) "Wherefore he saith, Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee." (Eph. 5: 14.) There are too many professed Christians today who are afraid to trust God for that which seems out of their reach. Jeremiah had a difficult time with rebellious Jerusalem and Judah, but Jehovah said to him, "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and will show thee great things, and difficult, which thou knowest not." (Jer. 33: 3.)

In his book, *Joyous Adventure*, Dr. David A. MacLennan tells of a British visitor to America who wrote that the pattern of North American preaching is, "Let me suggest that you try to be good." Dr. MacLennan then adds that whatever that is, it is not apostolic preaching, and (to use his word) he says to put over against that Peter's blunt statement, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." That is, view yourselves as you really are, become poor in spirit, do that which you are told to do, and you will be blessed. You will not need to pray for the Spirit, Dr. MacLennan continues; you will have it, or rather, and he notes, you will have him. No one can ever be good in God's sight by his own unaided efforts. When men try that they only produce instruments of annihilation. Some one has suggested that the preamble of the American Constitution should be amended to read, "We hold this truth to be self-evident, that all men shall be *cremated* equal." Thus, instead of trying to be good, in and of ourselves, we had better, in faith and humility, endeavor to get ourselves in touch with God's power. (Cf. Heb. 4: 12, 13; Phil. 4: 13.) "Can these bones live?" Let us remember that that is Jehovah's question; and our answer should be, "Yes, indeed, if the power of God has access to them." Whether we live or whether we die will depend upon our relationship to God. (Cf. 2 Cor. 12: 9, 10.)

#### The Life-Giving God

(Ezek. 37: 7-10)

*So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and, behold, an earthquake; and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And I beheld, and, lo, there were sinews upon them, and flesh came up, and skin covered them above; but there was no breath in them. Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.*

The dry bones, in the vision which we are considering, came together and were clothed with sinews, flesh, and skin; but there was no life in them. God alone can impart life; and he is always ready to give when men are ready to receive. "And ye will not come to me, that ye may have life." (John 5: 40.) The preaching of Ezekiel prepared the way for the Lord's blessings to Israel; and the same principle must be followed to-day. Preparation first, and then life. Jehovah formed man of the dust of the ground, before he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; with the result that man became a living soul. (Gen. 2: 7.) That is still God's order: preaching comes first, which results in preparation; and then comes the Spirit. (Read again Acts 2: 38.)

The church which bears the name of Christ may have in it order, reverence, and the appearance of fraternity; but if the Spirit is not there, it is dead. "But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." (Rom. 8: 9b.) Jesus told the angel of the church in Sardis that he knew their works, that they had a name that they were living; but he told them that they were dead. (See Rev. 3: 1.) James declares that the body apart from the spirit is dead (James 2: 26); and what is true of the physical body is just as true of the spiritual body, "Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. 3: 16.) It is God's will that the church be his dwelling-place "in the Spirit" (Eph. 2: 22); and if that is not so, then it is easy to account for the inactivity of the congregation as a whole, and the individual members.

There was a time when the Spirit, dwelling in people, enabled some of them to exercise miraculous power; but that time has long since passed. (Cf. 1 Cor. 13: 8; Eph. 4: 8-16.) The Spirit, of course, still dwells in God's people to comfort them (John 14: 16, 17), to help their infirmity (Rom. 8: 26, 27), to strengthen them with power in the inward man (Eph. 3: 16), and to assist them in bearing the fruit which is well-pleasing to God (Gal. 5: 16, 22, 23, 25); and the only way for any congregation or individual Christians to be alive unto God, is to follow his revealed instruction and be filled with the Spirit of life.

(Cf. Rom. 8: 2; Eph. 5: 18.) This will always produce the desired results.

It was pointed out earlier in this lesson that the power of God is exercised through human means. It is as if Jehovah had declared, "It is my power, Ezekiel, but it is exercised through your ministry." The same principle is still applicable today. In the words of The Great Texts of the Bible, "The turning-point of the prophet's ministry was when he bore a message declaring that the Lord would do the very thing which men themselves said was impossible. For that prophecy had a quickening power in it which brought about its own fulfilment. And so has it always proved. When God's servants tell men plainly of their 'death in sin,' of their utter want of power in themselves to serve the living God, and yet proclaim that God has sent his message for this very purpose, that they shall live, it brings its own fulfilment. Often men think otherwise. They call it a discouraging doctrine! They say, 'What use is there in preaching the helplessness of man?' But that is not the kernel of our message; it is the helpfulness and the power of God. God sends his message for this very purpose—to rouse men, to draw together these bones to one another, to call to them 'Arise from the dead' for Christ shall give them light. It is *then* and thus that awakenings, conversions, revivals have invariably followed."

Paul wrote some early Christians, "And you did he make alive, when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2: 1; Col. 2: 13); and he made it plain that the same power which was used in raising Christ from the dead was also employed in raising them from their spiritual death. (Read Eph. 1: 19, 20.) It is God's power; but, as in the case of Ezekiel, it is applied through the gospel message. "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.) The gospel moves people to do as God commands, that is, it does if they be-

lieve it. There are too many people who are trying to become righteous after their own way, instead of God's way. (See Rom. 10: 1-3; cf. Isa. 55:

8, 9.) The same principle applies to "dead" people, whether in the church or out it; for the gospel is equally applicable to both. (Cf. Rom. 16: 25.)

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

What impression does the narrative of the valley of dry bones make upon you?

What is the principal lesson which it teaches?

Why is a lesson like this so badly needed?

How did Ezekiel come to see this valley of dry bones?

Describe the sight which he saw.

### The Golden Text

To whom does "my servant David" refer? Give reasons for your answer.

Who was the last king in the dynasty of David to sit upon the throne of Judah before Christ? How do you know that your answer is true?

What was the apparent reason for restoring only the southern kingdom?

What proof do we have that Christ is the one for whom the throne of David was intended?

### The Prophet's Vision and a Vital Question

What truth does the vision of the valley of dry bones illustrate?

What encouragement should this give to us?

What are some of the problems which face the average congregation today?

What attitude do many people manifest toward these problems?

What should be their attitude toward them?

### The Purpose of the Vision

Why was the vision given to Ezekiel?

Whom did the bones represent?

What lesson did Jehovah want the prophet to get from the vision?

In what way is the power of God exerted, so far as people are concerned?

What lesson should this truth teach us?

How alone can people be made strong?

### The Life-Giving God

What happened to the dry bones when Ezekiel did as he was commanded?

What is the place and purpose of preaching God's word?

Why is it essential that the Spirit dwell in God's people?

How may people be sure that they have the Spirit?

What does the Spirit do for God's people?

Why is it so essential that preaching be done?

What particular thing should always be emphasized?

## Lesson XIII—September 27, 1964

# JEHOVAH'S GLORIOUS TEMPLE

## Lesson Text

Ezek. 43: 1-12

1 Afterward he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh toward the east.

2 And, behold, the glory of the God of Is'-ra-el came from the way of the east: and his voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shined with his glory.

3 And it was according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city; and the visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Che'-bar; and I fell upon my face.

4 And the glory of Je-ho'-vah came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east.

5 And the Spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of Je-ho'-vah filled the house.

6 And I heard one speaking unto me out of the house; and a man stood by me.

7 And he said unto me, Son of man, *this is* the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Is'-ra-el for ever. And the house of Is'-ra-el shall no more defile my holy name, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoredom, and by the dead bodies of their kings *in* their high places;

8 In their setting of their threshold by my threshold, and their door-post beside my door-post, and there was *but* the wall between me and them; and they have defiled my holy name by their abominations which they have committed: wherefore I have consumed them in mine anger.

9 Now let them put away their

whoredom, and the dead bodies of their kings, far from me; and I will dwell in the midst of them for ever.

10 Thou, son of man, show the house to the house of Is'-ra-el, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and let them measure the pattern.

11 And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, make known unto them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the egresses

thereof, and the entrances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof; and write it in their sight; that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them.

12 This is the law of the house: upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of Jehovah"* (Psalm 122: 1.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Ezek. 43: 13-27.

### Daily Bible Readings

September 21. M.....Church God's Temple Today (Heb. 3: 1-6)  
 September 22. T.....Proper Conduct in House of God (1 Tim. 3: 1-15)  
 September 23. W.....The Tabernacle Once the House of God (1 Sam. 3: 15-18)  
 September 24. T.....The Temple Once the House of God (1 Kings 8: 12-21)  
 September 25. F.....God does not now Dwell in Such (Acts 17: 22-31)  
 September 26. S.....Who Shall Dwell in His House? (Psalm 15: 1-5)  
 September 27. S.....God's Eternal Home (John 15: 1-7)

TIME.—574 B.C.

PLACE.—Chaldea.

PERSONS.—Jehovah and Ezekiel.

### Introduction

The temple which is referred to in the lesson now before us is apparently the church of the New Testament, which is presented under the imagery of the temple of the Old Testament. We should keep in mind that Ezekiel and the other prophets, notably Jeremiah, predicted the destruction of Solomon's temple; and now, twenty years later, Ezekiel gives a description of the new temple (church) which would be Jehovah's dwelling-place. (Cf. Ezek. 1: 1-3; 40: 1.) The measurements of this new temple are given in Ezek., chapters 40-42. Jehovah had abandoned the old temple before it was destroyed, and it was necessary that the new temple be built before he could dwell in it. But the temple, in order to be well-pleasing to God, would have to be built according to his specifications; and that apparently was what was signified by the measurements of the temple, already referred to.

The actual measurements of the temple which are given by Ezekiel were probably those of the temple built by Solomon, and the prophet's message regarding it would no doubt serve as a motive of hope to the peo-

ple of Israel, in being delivered from captivity, seeing their temple rebuilt, and again being permitted to worship Jehovah in the land of their fathers. The Jews indeed were restored to their former home, the temple was rebuilt, and they were allowed to renew their worship; but it will have to be admitted that the later prophets spent much of their time in picturing that which would happen when the spiritual temple would be erected, and the worship in keeping with the mission of the Messiah would be inaugurated. (Cf. the last six chapters of Zechariah and the Book of Malachi.)

In commenting on the new order of things, Bewer says, "To Ezekiel the national and social restoration of Israel needed an ecclesiastical restoration to insure its permanence. It was of prime importance that the Lord should return and dwell among his people. As prophet Ezekiel had foretold that in the new era the Lord would put his Spirit within his people and thus enable them to live in accordance with his will. But as priest he felt that they needed the temple as the visible symbol of the Lord's

presence, and clean, legitimate rites as a means of training them to acknowledge and respect his holiness and to express their loyalty and devotion to him in outward acts. The sharp distinction between the sacred and the profane was of crucial importance in this." All three of the prophets which we have studied this

year, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, told of the return of the exiles to their homeland; but their principal message, or so it seems, was to foretell of the coming of the Messiah and of the new order which he would set up. As a climax to this, Ezekiel pictures the Lord as he returns to his glorious temple.

## The Golden Text

*"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of Jehovah "*

Psalms 120-134 are called songs of ascents, and they were probably sung by pilgrims who were going up to Jerusalem for the annual feasts, or ritually on one of the stairways in or near the temple. David was the author of the psalm from which the words of the golden text are taken. Not only did the words which he wrote express his own sentiments; they were suited to the needs of others. A suitable song, which is properly sung, will often do more for a spiritually minded person, than the same idea expressed in prose will do. And it is for this reason that we are exhorted to speak "one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with" our hearts to the Lord. (See Eph. 5: 19.) The house of Jehovah about which David spoke in the passage now under consideration was no doubt the place of worship during his day, but the words can also be extended to include the church of our day.

The house of God, so far as we are concerned, is the church, not the building, but the assembly of the saints. Isaiah prophesied, "And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem."

(Isa. 2: 2, 3.) In his first letter to Timothy, Paul says, "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Tim. 3: 14, 15.)

The words of the golden text set forth the spirit which should characterize God's people when they enter the place of worship. Such a privilege was to the psalmist a matter of gladness and thanksgiving; and that is the way that we should feel about the matter today. And if that were true, we would never absent ourselves from the assembly of the saints, if it is at all possible for us to be there. The Speaker's Bible notes that in the church of the New Testament the emphasis is on the spirituality of the worship, and the presence of God is no longer limited or localized, as it was during the Old Testament period. Jesus, as all Bible students know, made this plain to the woman at the well (John 4: 21-24); but in saying what he did to her, Jesus did not teach that it is no longer necessary to have special places and assemblies for worship. To quote further from The Speaker's Bible, "And so we find the Christian Church coming to birth at Pentecost, and wherever the gospel was received believers gathered into groups for corporate worship. If in time some grew negligent the apostolic injunction was given, 'Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together,' for a solitary Christian was barely conceivable. If he did exist he was, at least, an impoverished creature, cut off from the highest privileges of the Christian life."

## The Text Explained

### The Lord's Return to the Temple

(Ezek. 43: 1-5)

*Afterward he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh toward the east. And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shined with his glory. And it was according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city; and the visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face. And the glory of Jehovah came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east. And the Spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of Jehovah filled the house.*

The preceding three chapters of Ezekiel, chapters 40-42, imply that the temple was ready for the reception of the Lord; and the glory of Jehovah which filled it was comparable to the Shekinah-glory which filled the tabernacle and the first temple (cf. Ex. 40: 34, 35; 1 Kings 8: 10, 11; 2 Chron. 7: 1, 2.) This glory was the visible sign of Jehovah's presence. Nothing is said about the glory of Jehovah filling the temple which was rebuilt by the returning exiles; and that strongly implies that that was not the temple of which Ezekiel spoke. Haggai spoke of the new order of things and said, "And I will fill this house with glory, 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 give peace, saith Jehovah of hosts." (Hag. 2: 7, 9; cf. John 1: 14; 2: 18-21.)

The old temple had been in ruins about fourteen years when Ezekiel uttered the words of the prophecy we are now considering, and it was long before the new temple was built. Ezekiel therefore did not enter a literal temple, but was evidently describing the glorious temple to come, as if he were actually there. The prophet compared his present vision to the one which he had seen by the river Chebar twenty years before. That was the time when he said that he came to destroy the city, that is, to speak God's word for its destruc-

tion. His mission at the time of the lesson was to tell of the restored temple; not of its destruction.

In commenting on the statement that the glory of Jehovah came into the house by way of the gate which faced the east, Adam Clarke says, "Is there not a mystery here? All knowledge, all religion, and all arts, and sciences, have travelled according to the *course of the sun*, from east to west! From that quarter the Divine glory first came; and thence the rays of Divine light continue to diffuse themselves over the face of the earth. From thence came the *Bible*, and through that the *new covenant*. From thence came the *prophets*, the *apostles*, and the *first missionaries*, that brought the knowledge of God to *Europe*, to the *isles of the sea*, and to the *west first*, and afterwards to these *northern regions*

As The Interpreter's Bible puts it, a renewed and dedicated Israel stood ready and waiting for God; and he returned in the same glorious majesty with which he left the city when their sins made his presence there intolerable. It is easy to see that the prophet understood something of the very heart of the gospel. The God who redeems us is the same God who condemned us for our transgressions. He forsakes those who are disloyal to him; but he loves them well enough to try to win them back to his love and mercy. The sole guarantee that our salvation will be final, so far as God's part is concerned, is that it is undertaken by the God who knows our frailty, and who will spare no effort to bring us to repentance. (Cf. 1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9.)

### Jehovah Speaks from the Inner Sanctuary

(Ezek. 43: 6-9)

*And I heard one speaking unto me out of the house; and a man stood by me. And he said unto me, Son of man, this is the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever. And the house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoredom, and by the dead bodies of their kings in their high places; in their setting of*



*their threshold, and their door-post beside my door-post, and there was but the wall between me and them; and they have defiled my holy name by their abominations which they have committed: wherefore I have consumed them in mine anger. Now let them put away their whoredom, and the dead bodies of their kings far from me; and I will dwell in the midst of them for ever.*

Reference was made in the preceding section of our lesson for today to the glory which was manifested in Jesus when the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and to the fact that he referred to his body in contrast with the temple in which the Jews worshipped. Adam Clarke thinks that the tabernacle and temple of the Old Testament were types of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, and that in the latter temple "dwelleth all the fulness of the God-head bodily." The church is the body of Christ, and, as such, it shares his glory. (Cf. Eph. 5: 25-27; 3: 20, 21.) Clarke continues: "Into this *immaculate humanity* did the glory of the Supreme God enter; and thus, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.' And this Jesus is *Immanuel*, God *with* us. In him we find united the *ineffable majesty* of God, with the *abjectness of man*. He humbled himself in human nature, not only to bear the *form of a servant*, but to *suffer death upon the cross* as a malefactor *slave*! But by these means he has purchased *eternal redemption* for us; and the *spiritual Israel*, who find redemption in his blood, shall be raised up wherever his *holy name* shall be proclaimed; and shall not, like the old apostate Israel, *defile* that *great name* by idolatry or a life of wickedness, but they shall show forth the virtues of him who has called them from darkness into his marvellous light."

The new design for the temple implies nothing short of a complete revolution in the relation between church and state. During the days of the kings of Israel, it appears that the house of Jehovah was not adjacent, but also subservient to the king's house. It took Solomon thirteen years to build his own house, but only seven to build the temple. (See 1 Kings 6: 37-7: 1.) Furthermore, the text now before us seems to imply that the bodies of the kings

who died were brought into the precincts of the temple, probably in connection with the idolatrous rites which were performed for them. We know that the wicked kings actually placed graven images of their idols in the house of Jehovah (cf. 2 Chron. 33: 7); and if they would do that, they certainly would not hesitate to order that their dead bodies be brought into the house which was called by God's name.

In the closing verse of chapter 42, we read, "He measured it on the four sides: it had a wall round about, the length five hundred, and the breadth five hundred, *to make a separation between that which was holy and that which was common.*" (Ezek. 42: 20.) One gets the impression that some of the kings of Israel felt that they had the right to direct the affairs of the temple, and some of them actually did so. (Cf. 1 Kings 2: 27, 35; 2 Chron. 26: 16; 2 Kings 16: 10-18.) It was upon the basis of this accepted principle that the abuses of Manasseh's reign and the reforms of Josiah's were made possible. But Ezekiel learned from Jehovah that things would be different when the new temple supplanted the old. The church must be the church, and neither the world nor the governments of men can enter the church with the Lord's approval. The Lord's house must not be a mere annex of the state. The Interpreter's Bible calls attention to the fact that there are some churches in Great Britain which give the impression, judging from the memorial tablets on their walls, that there are just two ways of serving God worth mentioning, one in the church, and the other in the armed services of the country. The flag of our country should be respected, and so should the memory of those who gave their lives in defense of their country; but church buildings which are used in service to God are not the places for showing such respect. These things belong to this world, and the world and the church must be kept separated; the principle of spiritual independence must always characterize the church. There must always be "a separation between that which is holy and that which is common."

Jehovah says that his dwelling-place shall be in his house (cf. Eph. 2: 22), and that his throne (majesty

and authority, cf. Eph. 1: 22, 23) and the soles of his feet (his condescension in dwelling among men) will be there; and where God is, his will must be respected. He will not permit his name to be profaned, nor his house desecrated. It is true that the building in which the church meets is not sacred, but that which people permit themselves to do does make a difference in God's attitude toward them.

### The Vision Must Be Practically Applied

(Ezek. 43: 10-12)

*Thou, son of man, show the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and let them measure the pattern. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, make known unto them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof and the egresses thereof, and the entrances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the laws thereof; and write it in their sight; that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them. This is the law of the house: upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house.*

It is always a serious moment when a vision or a lesson has to be translated into action; and the difficulty is made greater when one man sees the vision or delivers the lesson, and another must act upon it. The practical man tends to dismiss the seer or the preacher as a mere dreamer, while the seer or the preacher brands the practical man as a compromiser. But life requires both the preacher and the man who must implement the teaching; we must put into practice in space and time that which we have seen by an insight into the eternal. This is equally true of the preacher and the hearer.

God has made it plain that there is a great gulf between the sinful ways of the world, and the way of righteousness. He wants sinners to see that which he has provided for them (cf. 1 Cor. 2: 9, 10), but he demands that they recognize the difference between their ways and his way; and demonstrate their true attitude by their action. The practical meaning of this is repentance. When the peni-

tent believer has demonstrated that he is sincere, he is then showed the will of God and is told what he must do. The people of Israel already knew of God and believed that he did exist; but they did not trust him. However, when they saw that which God had provided for them, they were expected to be ashamed of their sinful ways, and turn to the Lord.

The word "repent" is a translation of the Greek verb *metanoëo*, which means "to change one's mind" (Thayer); "to have another mind" (Young); "to think differently of afterwards, i. e. reconsider" (Strong). Our English word "repentance" is a translation of the Greek noun *metanoia*, which means "a change of mind." Repentance answers to the Latin *resipisco*, which means to recover one's senses, to come to himself. This thought, 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 of 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. Repentance implies a true knowledge of sin, a conviction of sin, with its guilt, condemnation, and terrible consequences. It means that the sinner changes his thoughts regarding sin, and his attitude toward it. Repentance is produced by godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7: 10; Rom. 2: 4; Acts 17: 30, 31; 3: 19); and results in a reformation of life (Matt. 3: 8). A reformation of life implies that the penitent's manner of living, insofar as it is wrong, be changed with reference to God, Christ, his fellow man, and himself, to *the extent of his ability*.

When one shows that he really wants to serve the Lord, then he must be given specific instruction, so that he will know exactly what is expected of him. Both Ezekiel and John tell of the measurements which God has made for his house and for those who dwell therein, and it should be our sole desire to learn of them and act accordingly. After the great apostasy, John says, "And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and one said, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them

that worship therein." (Rev. 11: 1.) This means that the church, the worship, and the worshippers all must meet God's specifications, if they are to be accepted by him. This, in the words of Ezekiel, "is the law of the house." In the words of Adam Clarke, "From the top of the mountain on which it stands, to the bottom, *all round about*, all shall be holy; no buildings shall be erected in any part,

nor place nor spot be appropriated to a common use; all shall be considered as being *most holy*. "Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. 12: 14.) "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.)

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

What was the temple which Ezekiel saw in the vision? Give reasons for your answer.

Why was the temple of this lesson measured?

Why was it essential that a new temple be built?

Why are acts of worship required of the Lord's people?

### The Golden Text

Discuss the setting of the words which serve as the golden text of this lesson.

Why was David glad when they said unto him, Let us go unto the house of Jehovah?

What is the house of Jehovah, so far as we are concerned?

Why should all Christians rejoice when they can meet for worship?

Why can't people absent themselves from the house of the Lord and still worship him acceptable?

### The Lord's Return to the Temple

What was the glory of the Lord which came into the temple?

What is said of the glory of the new temple?

What is the significance of saying that the glory of Jehovah came from the east?

What is implied in saying that Jehovah returned to the temple?

Why are we sure of our salvation, if we faithfully obey the Lord?

### Jehovah Speaks from the Inner Sanctuary

What did the tabernacle and temple of the Old Testament prefigure?

In what way is the church related to Christ and how does it share his glory?

How did God say that his people in the new temple would react toward him?

What lesson do we learn from this regarding the relationship between the church and the state?

What is this separation so essential?

What did Jehovah say regarding the proximity of the Israelites to his house during Old Testament times?

Name some ways in which the things of the world often invade the holy precincts of the church?

What does Jehovah say regarding his habitation in the church?

What lesson should we learn from this?

### The Vision Must Be Practically Applied

What is always necessary when people learn the truth?

How do the teachers and the hearers often regard each other?

Why is this so?

What lesson has God made plain to his people?

Why does he expect to be ashamed of their sinful ways?

What is the practical meaning of this?

What is repentance?

Discuss its practical working as it relates to sin.

When do people have specific instruction about serving the Lord?

What is the law of the house of the Lord?

Why is holiness so essential?



## FOURTH QUARTER

### LETTERS TO YOUNG EVANGELISTS— TIMOTHY AND TITUS

*Aim.—To observe the influence of the great apostle over two young gospel preachers, Timothy and Titus, whom he loved very much, and to profit by the marvelous lessons of truth which he taught them.*

#### Lesson I—October 4, 1964

### PAUL'S FIRST LETTER TO TIMOTHY

#### Lesson Text

##### 1 Tim. 1: 1-11

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Je'-sus according to the commandment of God our Saviour, and Christ Je'-sus our hope;

2 Unto Tim'-o-ty, my true child in faith: Grace, mercy, peace, from God the Father and Christ Je'-sus our Lord.

3 As I exhorted thee to tarry at Eph'-e-sus, when I was going into Mac-e-do'-ni-a, that thou mightest charge certain men not to teach a different doctrine,

4 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.*

5 But the end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned:

6 From which things some having

swerved have turned aside unto vain talking;

7 Desiring to be teachers of the law, though they understand neither what they say, nor whereof they confidently affirm.

8 But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully,

9 As knowing this, that law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and unruly, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,

10 For fornicators, for abusers of themselves with men, for menstealers, for liars, for false swearers, and if there be any other thing contrary to the sound doctrine;

11 According to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

Golden Text.—*"He counted me faithful, appointing me to his service."*  
(1 Tim. 1: 12.)

Devotional Reading.—1 Tim. 1: 12-17.

#### Daily Bible Readings

September 28. M.....Paul's Great Regard for Timothy (Phil. 2: 19-30)  
September 29. T.....Timothy Associate of Paul (Acts 16: 1-5)  
September 30. W.....Paul's Charges to Timothy (1 Tim. 1: 18-20; 2 Tim. 4: 1, 2)  
October 1. T.....Why Paul Wrote (1 Tim. 3: 14-16)  
October 2. F.....A Second Epistle (2 Tim. 1: 1-18)  
October 3. S.....Paul's Letters (2 Pet. 3: 14-18)  
October 4. S.....Paul Admonishes Timothy (1 Tim. 6: 11-20)

Time.—Probably between A.D. 65-67.

Place.—Paul was in Macedonia, probably in Philippi; Timothy was in Ephesus.

Persons.—Paul and Timothy.

#### Introduction

The three epistles which we are to study during the quarter which is just beginning are so closely related that they must stand or fall together.

It is true that each of them has its own peculiarities, but it is also true that they have so much in common as to make it necessary that

they be grouped together. Their general situation and aim are substantially the same. The following statement from Hastings' *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church (in loco)* seems to be a fair appraisal of their nature and relation to Paul's other epistles. "The epistles possess common elements of language, similar features of doctrine, discipline, organization, and an atmosphere laden with kindred varieties of error, which constitute them a group distinct from the other epistles of Paul, in fact so distinct that many scholars of varied schools have found difficulty in accepting them as authentic."

The question regarding their authenticity, in fact, has long been in dispute. There are scholars who categorically deny that Paul wrote them; but there are many others who are just as confident that he did write them. In his Introduction to the Pastoral Epistles in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, Newport J. D. White "finds it easier to believe that St. Paul was the author of them, as they have come down to us, than that a Paulinist (assuming that there was ever a special school of Pauline thought), sometime between 90 and 120 A.D., worked up a few fragments of genuine letters of his master into 2 Timothy and Titus, and then composed 1 Timothy in imitation of his own style. This second alternative represents, broadly speaking, the theory of the anti-traditional school of critics."

*The Greater Men and Women of the Bible* notes that among the friends of Paul there is no one who

appeals more to our interest and sympathies than Timothy. For not only was he associated with the apostle during a longer period than any of his other companions, but he was evidently regarded with an altogether peculiar affection and esteem. Following the example of the apostle John, Timothy might have called himself "the disciple whom Paul loved;" for the great apostle to the Gentiles never paid a greater tribute to any of his fellow workers, than the one he penned regarding Timothy. "But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will care truly for your state. For they all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a child serveth a father, so he served with me in furtherance of the gospel." (Phil. 2: 19-22.) It is easy to see from this quotation that Timothy shared his spiritual father's outward labors and intimate thoughts. He was with Paul when the apostle could not or would not have the companionship of others. Timothy was sent on some of the most delicate and confidential missions, and was given places of great responsibility with some of the most important congregations. When Paul was in his last and almost lonely imprisonment it was Timothy whom he summoned to console him and to receive his last injunctions. Everything therefore which we can learn regarding Timothy is significant for the light it throws upon the character alike of the pupil and of the master.

### The Golden Text

"He counted me faithful, appointing me to his service" Paul received the gospel as a trust, as we shall see further on in this study, and it was a wonderful blessing to him to be able to say that the Lord counted him faithful to that trust. If one should read every word which the apostle wrote, and every word which was written about him, he would not find a single instance of unfaithfulness on his part. The secret of his great success as a servant of Christ may be learned from such passages as the following: "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.) "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not found vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." (1 Cor. 15: 10; cf. 2 Cor. 11: 23-28.)

The faithfulness which characterized Paul in the service of Christ is the same as that which Jesus de-

scribed in the parable of the talents, in contrast with the unfaithfulness of the slothful servant. (See Matt. 25: 14-30.) The men with the five and two talents began their work immediately, with the result that when their lord returned from his journey they were ready with a report that they had made a hundred per cent gain on the capital which they had received. But the man with the one talent made no gain at all, because he had buried that which he could have worked with. When the Lord appointed Paul to his service, he began his work immediately. "But when it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb, and 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." (Gal. 1: 15, 16.) "Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but declared both to them of Damascus first, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the country of Judaea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance." (Acts 26: 19, 20.)

Just how well Paul succeeded in his mission for Christ may be learned from the record which he has left for us. "For I will not dare to speak of any things save those which Christ wrought through me, for the obedience of the Gentiles, by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Holy Spirit; so that from Jerusalem, and

round about even unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." (Rom. 15: 18, 19.) These words were written to the brethren in Rome, in anticipation of his visit to them; and he was also able to say to them that he had no further place in those regions where he might preach Christ, so thoroughly had he covered that area. (See Rom. 15: 22-25.) And to the Colossians he was able to write, "If so be that ye continue in the faith grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye heard, which was preached in all creation under heaven; whereof I Paul was made a minister." (Col. 1: 23; cf. Mark 16: 15.) In the words of Jennie Wilson,

Can the Master call me faithful  
When the darkness falls on me?  
Leaving earthly fields of labor  
Heaven's glory shall I see?  
Am I toiling in the harvest  
Where for him I ought to reap,  
Gathering sheaves all bright and  
golden  
Ere the shades of night grow deep?  
Out on sin's bleak, lonely moun-  
tains  
Precious souls have gone astray;  
Jesus bids me help to save them  
Am I seeking to obey?  
May the Holy Spirit guide me  
In the work that I should do,  
So that to the loving Master  
I may never be untrue.  
Can the Master call me faithful  
When time's fleeting day is done?  
By my glad, whole-hearted service  
Will the crown of life be won?

## The Text Explained

### The Salutation

(1 Tim. 1: 1, 2)

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Saviour, and Christ Jesus our hope; unto Timothy, my true child in faith: Grace, mercy, peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Greek letters usually began with the name of the sender, followed by that of the receiver, to whom the greetings were sent. Paul did not begin all of his letters by referring to himself as an apostle; but in cases where his apostolic authority had been challenged, or where it needed

to be asserted for the benefit of those who might challenge it, he made use of the term. Notable exceptions to this were in the letters to the Thesalonians, Philemon, and the Philipians. These four letters were written to beloved friends and brethren in Christ, and there was no occasion for calling to their attention his apostleship. But in the case now before us, Paul was assigning to Timothy a task to perform which required that he speak with authority; and in case his right to speak in that manner should be called in question, he could very easily read his commission from a letter which was writ-

ten to him by an apostle who had been made so by both God and his Son Jesus Christ. Preachers today are very often called on to deal with situations which involve speaking with authority; and if they will make sure that they are speaking the word of the Lord, the result will likely be more satisfactory.

The term "Saviour" occurs twenty-four times in the New Testament, and of that number eight references are to God, six of them in

1 Timothy and Titus. God is our Saviour in the sense of being the original source (cf. 2 Cor. 5: 18, 19); while Jesus is the agent through whom it is accomplished (1 John 4: 14). Christ is our hope, both in this life and in that which is to come. (Cf. 1 Cor. 15: 19.) Timothy apparently was converted by Paul at Lystra during the first great missionary journey which was made by him and Barnabas. We first hear of Timothy in Acts 16: 1-3. Other that

2 Timothy, the salutation here as a whole has no parallel in the epistles of Paul.

### Paul's Charge to Timothy: Main-sound Doctrine

(1 Tim. 1: 3-7)

*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.*

"Stay where you are at Ephesus" is the way in which Moffatt renders the expression now before us, while all of verses 3 and 4 is given by Phillips in these words: "I am repeating in this letter the advice I gave you just before I went to Macedonia and urged you to stay at Ephesus. I wanted you to do this so that you could order certain persons to stop inventing new doctrines and to leave hoary old myths and interminable genealogies alone. They only raise queries in men's minds without leading them to faith in God."

There are times when gospel preachers should move on, and there are times when they should stay where they are. However, the Lord's people in many areas have

developed such disrespect for the God-ordained place and work of gospel preachers, as to make it next to impossible for a preacher to deal with a situation similar to that which Paul pictures here. And, too, preachers all through the years have manifested arrogance to the extent that their usefulness has been all but completely destroyed. If all the people in the church would stop to consider the fact that **Christ** is the head of the church, and all that which is done must be done "in the Lord," we would have a different story to tell. Preachers have never been authorized to entertain the people, but to preach the word of the Lord on all pertinent questions; and it is the duty of all others, and the preacher too, to give earnest heed to that which the Lord commands. There is no room in the Lord's program for anything which owes its origin to men; and it is the business of those who are charged with teaching the truth to see to it that false teachers are not permitted to lead others into error.

*But the end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned: from which things some having swerved have turned aside unto vain talking; desiring to be teachers of the law, though they understand neither what they say, nor whereof they confidently affirm.*

The real purpose in gospel preaching is not to antagonize people who are in error, and drive them out of the church; but rather to enable them to see the error of their way, and lead them to repentance. God does not want any one to be lost (1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9); but he cannot and will not save those who continue in those things which are contrary to sound doctrine. It is the business therefore of faithful gospel preachers and teachers to oppose false teachers, but they must make sure that their motives are pure and that they themselves are doing as God would have them do. Preachers can sometimes manifest such an attitude as to make themselves just as unacceptable to the Lord, as are those whom they are opposing. But when preachers have a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith which is genuine, they will pos-



sess a love which seeks to fulfill the law of God (cf. Rom. 13: 10.)

The word "swerved" is found in the New Testament only here, 6: 21 and 2 Tim. 2: 18 and it literally means, as the margin has it, to miss *the mark*. Those false teachers had missed those things—a pure heart, a good conscience, and genuine faith—which result in love; and they turned aside unto vain talking, probably the kind referred to in Tit. 3: 9 and 1 Tim. 6: 20. And while desiring to be teachers of the law, they did not understand what they were talking about. As Phillips has it, "They want a reputation as teachers of the law, yet they fail to realize the meaning of their own words, still less of the subject they are so dogmatic about." Many thoughtful people today have seen this situation re-enacted many times.

### The True Purpose of the Law and Its Relation to the Gospel

(1 Tim. 1: 8-11)

*But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully, as knowing this, that law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and unruly, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for abusers of themselves with men, for menstealers, for liars, for false swearers, and if there be any other thing contrary to the sound doctrine; according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.*

After showing that the would-be teachers of the law had clearly missed the point, Paul goes on to show Timothy what should be one's attitude toward the law. He says that the law is good, if it is properly used. The original word for the adverb "lawfully" is found in the New Testament only here and in 2 Tim. 2: 5, where the obvious meaning is that if one expects to win the award in an athletic contest, he will have to play according to the rules of the game. But that apparently is not the idea which Paul means to convey in the passage now before us. To use it lawfully in the sense of the present discussion, one will have to use the law according

to its design, in accordance with the spirit in which it was enacted.

The true purpose of the law is found in such passages as the following: "What then is the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise hath been made." (Gal. 3: 19.) "So that the law is become our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." (Gal. 3: 24.) "So that the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and righteous, and good. Did then that which is good become death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might be shown to be sin, by working death to me through that which is good;—that through the commandment sin might become exceeding sinful." (Rom. 7: 12, 13.) The law therefore was intended to awaken a sense of sin in wrongdoers, to cause them to become conscious of sin; and was not designed for righteous people. The law therefore is not binding on, nor relevant to, followers of Christ, and those, accordingly, who seek to be "Christian teachers" of the law do not even understand the relationship which the law has to God's people who are in Christ.

The "sound doctrine" is healthful (m a r g i n) or wholesome teaching, and, as the *Expositor's Greek Testament* observes, it "admirably describes Christian teaching, as St. Paul conceived it, in its complete freedom from casuistry or quibbles in its theory, and from arbitrary or unnatural restrictions in its practice." Unsound teaching in Paul's day, as it still is in our day, claimed to be gospel teaching (cf. Gal. 1: 6, 7); and it was for that reason that the apostle found it necessary to "recharge the word with its old force by distinguishing epithets, *euggelion* [gospel] had become impoverished by heterodox associations. The gospel with which St. Paul had been entrusted was *the gospel of the glory of the blessed God.*" (Op. cit. Cf. 2 Cor. 4: 4.)

The law and the gospel, so far as moral behavior is concerned, were based on the same principles, that is, the law forbade that which the gospel forbids; but inasmuch as the law has served its purpose (Gal. 3: 25; Rom. 10: 4) and has been taken out of the way (Col. 2: 14), and the

clearer and all-sufficient revelation of the gospel has been made, those who desire to explain the law (use it lawfully) will find the best explanation in the gospel which Paul said had been committed to him. "But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been man-

ifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even 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." (Rom. 3: 21-23; cf. 1 Thess. 2: 1-4.)

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Discuss the relationship of the three letters to Timothy and Titus.  
What reasons can you think of for believing that Paul wrote these letters?  
How did Paul feel toward Timothy?  
What value should we derive from the study of these epistles?

### The Golden Text

How did Paul regard his responsibility with reference to the gospel?  
What do we know about his success in that endeavor?  
What was the secret of his great achievements?  
What does faithfulness to a trust involve?  
What should be our feeling with respect to these things?

### The Salutation

How did Greek letters usually begin?  
Why did Paul generally refer to his apostleship at the beginning of his letters?  
What exceptions do we have to this rule?  
Why was the assertion of his apostleship especially needed in the letter now before us?  
What important lesson should preachers learn from this?  
Discuss the term "Saviour" as used in the epistles of the New Testament.  
In what sense is God our Saviour?  
What are the first things which we know of Timothy's relation to Paul?  
How does the salutation of 1 Timothy compare with others in the writings of Paul?

### Paul's Charge to Timothy: Maintain Sound Doctrine

What exhortation did Paul give Timothy and why?  
What responsibility do preachers have under such circumstances?  
What sometimes hinders them from discharging such obligations?  
What lesson in this respect should all Christian people learn?  
What is the best way to combat false teaching?  
What is the real purpose in gospel preaching?  
What motive should always characterize such preachers?  
How may they know that they have the proper attitude with respect to their work?  
What is the meaning of the term "swerved"?  
What was the desire and aim of the false teachers referred to in the text?

### The True Purpose of the Law and Its Relation to the Gospel

What is the Christian attitude toward the law?  
What is meant by using it "lawfully"?  
What is the true purpose of the law?  
What did Paul mean by saying that it was not made for a righteous man?  
What does the apostle mean by "sound doctrine"?  
In what ways have false teachers corrupted the gospel of Christ?  
How are the law and the gospel related as it respects moral behavior?  
What, then, is the best way to be a teacher of the law?  
Why is there so much misunderstanding regarding the relation between the law and the gospel?  
What is the best way to correct this misunderstanding?

## Lesson II—October 11, 1964

# PRAYER AND MODESTY ENJOINED

## Lesson Text

### 1 Tim. 2: 1-15

1 I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men;

2 For kings and all that are in high place; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity.

3 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

4 Who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.

5 For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, *himself* man, Christ Je'-sus,

6 Who gave himself a ransom for all; the testimony to *be borne* in its own times;

7 Whereunto I was appointed a

preacher and an apostle (I speak the truth, I lie not), a teacher of the Gen'-tiles in faith and truth.

8 I desire therefore that the men pray in every place, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and disputing.

9 In like manner, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefastness and sobriety; not with braided hair, and gold or pearls or costly raiment;

10 But (which becometh women professing godliness) through good works.

11 Let a woman learn in quietness with all subjection.

12 But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness.

13 For Adam was first formed, then Eve;

14 And Adam was not beguiled, but the woman being beguiled hath fallen into transgression:

15 But she shall be saved through her child-bearing, if they continue in faith and love and sanctification with sobriety.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Pray without ceasing."* (1 Thess. 5: 17.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Pet. 3: 1-6.

Daily Bible Readings

October 5. M.....	The Model Prayer (Matt. 6: 5-15)
October 6. T.....	Example of Supplications (Gen. 18: 23-32)
October 7. W.....	A Psalm of Prayer (Psalm 130: 1-8)
October 8. T.....	Modesty Required (1 Peter 3: 3-5)
October 9. F.....	Example of Immodest Conduct (Isa. 3: 16-26)
October 10. S.....	Reverent in Demeanor (Titus 3: 1-5)
October 11. S.....	Christian Conduct (Rom. 12: 1-21)

TIME.—Probably between A. D. 65-67.

PLACES.—Paul was in Macedonia, probably in Philippi; Timothy was in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and Timothy.

Introduction

In his book, *Sermonettes*, Homer Putnam Reeves says, "Prayer is one of the most distinct and delightful privileges accorded the Christian. Both history and personal experience testify eloquently of the great power which lies in the supplication of a righteous man. Prayer is our most precious means of connection with Divine Power. Somewhere and somehow, an unlimited source of vitalizing power exists. Man is the motor that can use this intangible power. Prayer is the feed line or conduit that connects man with the great source of supply. If we would tap the great treasury of well-being and draw freely from the great storehouse of heaven's bounty, it must be through the channel of prayer. The well of Divine Power is deep, and without prayer we would have no sweep by which to draw it up and put it to human use."

Prayer is either the primary fact in our experience, or the worst delusion. Prayer is not simply the stock in trade of preachers; it is "every man's supreme effort to find the right answer to the meaning of life."

When the faithful child of God goes to his heavenly Father in prayer, he may be sure that he will be heard; for God does not mock his children by teaching them to pray, and then refuse to hear them. Paul says, "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4: 6, 7.) Tennyson has well said that "more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice rise like a fountain for me night and day. For what are men better than sheep or goats that nourish a blind life within the brain, if, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer both for themselves and those who call them friend?"

But our lesson for today is also concerned with the question of modesty; and while the reference is primarily to the women, if one will only consider the facts in the case,

he will see that the subject is applicable to both men and women. The New Century Dictionary says that modesty is "freedom from vanity, boastfulness, etc.," while Webster notes that it is "also the temper resulting from a modest estimate of oneself; absence of self-assertion, arrogance, or presumption." Addison points out that "a just and reasonable modesty does not only recommend eloquence, but sets off every great talent which a man can be

possessed of. It heightens all the virtues which it accompanies; like the shades in paintings, it raises and rounds every figure, and makes the colors more beautiful, though not so glaring as they would be without it." But our lesson today, regarding the question of modesty, is primarily related to women, and it can best be understood, as we shall see further on in the study, in the light of such passages as Gen. 3; 1 Cor. 11: 2-16; 14: 33-38.

### The Golden Text

**"Pray without ceasing."** These words by Paul contain the same general idea as those used by Jesus when he taught that men "ought always to pray." (Luke 18: 1.) These and similar passages make it plain that prayer, so far as the Lord's people are concerned, is both universal and continuous. It is relatively easy for one to see the general truth which these passages contain; but it is not so easy to put the truth into practice. What does the New Testament mean when it teaches that the Lord's people should pray without ceasing? or that they should pray always? It should be obvious to any thoughtful person that the New Testament does not mean that one should always be engaged in the specific act of prayer, as that act is commonly understood; for if that should be done, then there would be no time for other duties which the Lord has enjoined upon his people. There should, of course, be regular times for prayer, just as there should be regular times for Bible study and other acts of worship and service; but the truth still remains that we should pray without ceasing.

Prayer has been described as "communion with an Ideal Companion"; and with this view of the question, it is easy to see that prayer is not primarily a matter of our talking, God's listening, and then answering, as is so generally assumed. Prayer, as used in the text now before us, is more an atmosphere than an act, more an attitude than a deed, more a spirit than a doing something. There are times, of course, when we should let our requests be made known unto God, but we can hold ourselves in true

with him at all times. We should expose the whole range of our lives to the God who made us, and seek to allow him to express himself through us. One does not always have to be talking to a companion, in order to have fellowship with him. If we truly want God's will to be done, then that will include his will in our own lives; and if we are continuously endeavoring to keep ourselves within the scope of God's purpose for us (cf. Rom. 8: 28), it shall be our constant aim, effort, and prayer to live as his word directs that we should (see 2 Cor. 5: 9).

In the closing part of his book, **Teach Me to Pray**, James DeForest Murch says that the crowning blessing of prayer is fellowship with God through Christ. His words continue: "The more we know about Christ the more we know about God. With the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Spirit to aid us in prayer we come into a precious relationship that is beyond words to describe. In prayer we know the touch of his hand. Depending on him we receive from him understanding and guidance. We learn to trust him when the heart is heavy, when the going is rough, when all is dark ahead. The joy of his companionship shines away the shadows and makes us thankful for all the things of life. He bids our restless spirits be free, yet quiet and balanced in him. He brings out the highest and the best in us and pours into our souls illimitable strength and power. He points out the better things to be and drives us toward their realization. Songs in the night watches turn into anthems of victory. We know God loves us—and that is *everything!*"

forever!" In the words of Ralph S. Cushman:

I met God in the morning  
When my day was at its best,  
And his presence came like sunrise,  
Like a glory in my breast.  
All day long the Presence lingered,  
All day long he stayed with me,  
And we sailed in perfect calmness  
O'er a very troubled sea.  
Other ships were blown and battered,  
Other ships were sore distressed,

But the winds that seemed to drive them  
Brought to us a peace and rest.  
Then I thought of other mornings,  
With a keen remorse of mind,  
When I too had loosed the moorings,  
With the Presence left behind.  
So I think I know the secret,  
Learned from many a troubled way;  
You must seek him in the morning  
If you want him through the day!

## The Text Explained

### The Duty and Privilege of Prayer

(1 Tim. 2: 1-4)

*I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men; 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.*

The beginning and close of chapter 1 mention the charge which Paul committed to Timothy, and in the beginning of chapter 2 the apostle begins to speak specifically of the duties which he wanted his son in the gospel to carry out. The first of these duties was with reference to prayer. While many commentators regard the reference here to public prayers, and particularly to those who lead them; but the same principle is equally applicable to private prayers. It is possible that Paul did not intend for the Lord's people to draw nice distinctions between the four phases of addressing God, it is also true that they are not exact synonyms. **Supplication**

means to ask for something because of a need which is recognized. **Prayer** is the heart's devotion addressed only to God. We may supplicate men, but we can pray only to God, that is, in the sense in which the term is used here. **Intercession** represents our childlike confidence in God, as we talk with him regarding the objects of our prayers. **Thanksgiving** is an expression of our gratitude, not only for the blessings which we have received but for the privilege of approaching God in prayer. Paul's

purpose in using all four of the phases of addressing God is probably to illustrate the universal scope of prayer, or to cover every possible variety of our approach to the heavenly Father.

The prayers of God's people must "be made for all men." No one can pray earnestly, and that is what Christians must do, for another person, and at the same time maintain a wrong attitude toward him. It is the Christian's duty to love, and if there is to be any vengeance wrought, that obligation belongs to God. (Read Rom. 12: 17-21.) If we take into consideration the fact that Paul wrote this letter to Timothy during the reign of one of the most wicked emperors (Nero) in Roman history, it will be easy for us to understand that it is God's will for us to pray for the bad rulers, as well as for the good; but the aim of the prayer is not so much for the success of the rulers, as for conditions to prevail so that the Lord's people may live as he intends that they should. The success of the spiritual reign, that is the reign of the Lord, is the object of the divine economy. "A tranquil and quiet life" probably refers to inward and outward peace, as we endeavor to live before God in all piety, while at the same time commanding the respect of our fellow men. **Godliness** refers to our relation to God; while gravity has to do with our relation to our fellow men. Vincent notes that the latter term "signifies *reverend* or *venerable*; exhibiting a dignity which arises from moral elevation, and thus invites reverence," that is, respect. (Cf. 1 Pet. 3: 13-17.)

The course of action which Paul

recommends in the first two verses of the lesson text now under consideration is good and acceptable to God; because he wants all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. If Christian people would keep this truth before them and allow it to motivate their attitude and action toward others, there would be less criticism and more praying on their part. A group of people who exemplify the traits of character described above will do more toward drawing men to Christ, than the resentful kind who refuse to respect those who are of the opposite way, and who refuse to pray for and honor those rulers who are not according to their liking. It is a fact, clearly set forth in the Bible, that God sometimes uses even wicked and base rulers to accomplish his purpose. (Cf. Dan. 4: 17; Heb. 1: 12-17; Isa. 10: 5-11; Rom. 13: 1-7; 1 Pet. 2: 13-17.) The only way by which any one can be saved is to come to the knowledge of the truth; and it is God's will that his people do all they can, both by teaching and example, to bring others to the truth. (Cf. John 6: 44, 45; 8: 31, 32; Rom. 1: 16, 17; Acts 2: 14-41.)

### **The Reason Why Christians Should Pray for All Men**

(1 Tim. 2: 5-7)

*For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all; the testimony to be borne in its own times; whereunto I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I speak the truth, I lie not), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.*

If Jehovah were only one among many gods, then it would be neither possible nor practical for his people to pray for all men; because there would be too many conflicting interests. But as it is, there is only one true God, and it is his desire that all men be saved. And this idea is further emphasized by the fact that there is only one mediator between God and men. God is one, "and he 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; as certain even of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring." (Acts 17: 26-28.)

And in order to make it possible for sinful mankind to understand how he can get back to God, a mediator who is both God and man was appointed for that purpose. A mediator must understand and be in sympathy with both of the estranged parties, and he must be recognized by both as having their interest at heart. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 18-21.) Not only did God give his Son to be the Saviour of men (John 3: 16; Rom. 5: 6-8), but Jesus himself was willing to take the form of a man, and give himself for their sins (John 10: 17, 18; Phil. 2: 5-8). And then in addition to the making of the divine arrangements, Paul says that the testimony regarding them, that is the gospel message of salvation, was to be proclaimed in due time (Cf. Gal. 4: 4), and that he was appointed as a preacher (an inspired messenger) and an apostle (a witness who is sent forth) for that purpose. The parenthetical statement was probably added because of the well-known opposition of false teachers, such as Judaizers and heretics, to his apostleship. There were probably men in the church in Ephesus who were among his critics. (Cf. 1 Tim. 1: 3, 4, 20; 2 Tim. 1: 15.)

### **Rules for Men and Women in Public Worship**

(1 Tim. 2: 8-15)

*I desire therefore that the men pray in every place, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and disputing. And in like manner, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefastness and sobriety; not with braided hair, and gold or pearls or costly raiment; but (which becometh women professing godliness) through good works. Let a woman learn in quietness with all subjection. But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness. For Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not beguiled, but the woman being beguiled hath fallen into transgression: but she shall be saved through her childbearing, if*

*they continue in faith and love and sanctification with sobriety.*

The men, and not the women, are to be the ministers of prayer in the public assemblies. In over-all summary of this section of the lesson text shows that the positive duty of women is to make themselves conspicuous, not by personal display, but by good works. Their relationship to men is that of subordination. This relationship had its origin in creation, the record of which is available to all who want to read it, while the application to Christians is fully set forth in such passages as the one now before us, and 1 Cor. 11: 2-16; 14: 33-35. It should be observed, however, that this subordinate relationship does not affect the salvation of women; for both men and women are the objects of God's love, though they must attain the supreme state of blessedness in the working out of the penalty which was imposed upon Adam and Eve. The human race was placed under a curse because of that which the first man and woman did; and that makes the duties and relationships which are set forth in this lesson obligatory upon men and women.

Those who participate in the worship must make sure that they themselves are pleasing to God. If a man's is not right toward God, his prayers will not be heard. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination." (Prov. 28: 9.) "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination, but the prayer of the upright is his delight." (Prov. 15: 8.) "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear." (Psalm 66: 18; cf. Isa. 59: 1, 2; 66: 1, 2.) Women, of course, are a part of the worshipping assembly, but instead of taking a leading part, they are expected to adorn themselves with becoming apparel, and be characterized by shamefastness and sobriety. Vincent says that the original force of the word from which we have "shamefastness" was *bound* or *made fast* by an honorable shame. (Cf. stedfastness.) It is, according to Thayer, a sense of shame which precedes and prevents the shameful act. Trench thinks of the term as that prudence which shrinks from overpassing the limits or womanly reserve and modesty. The practical

meaning of "sobriety" is sober-mindedness, or, as Trench expresses it, that habitual inner self-government, with its constant reign on all the passions and desires, which would hinder temptation from arising, or at all events from arising in such strength as would overrun the checks and barriers which shamefastness placed before it.

Women, as Paul plainly states, should allow not outward and costly adornments to overshadow and detract from the godly traits of character which are of great price in God's sight. (Cf. 1 Pet. 3: 1-4.) Godly women should not seek to imitate the women of the world in this respect. The original word for "becometh" means, according to Thayer, to stand out, to be conspicuous, to be eminent. Good works, and not the outward adorning of the body, should be the distinguishing mark of Christian women.

For women to learn in quietness with all subjection has reference to their behavior in the public assembly. (Cf. 1 Cor. 14: 34.) This was ordained of God, and that should settle the matter with those who respect his authority. Women should seek to increase their knowledge (Thayer), but they should do it in quietness, rather than in a public participation in the assemblies of the saints. Women, by apostolic authority, are not permitted to assume authority over men. It is not wrong for them to teach God's word, so long as this regulation is not violated. (Cf. Acts 18: 24-26.) There are two reasons given for the relative positions of men and women in the church, namely, (1) Adam was first formed, then Eve; and (2) the woman, and not the man, was beguiled and fell into transgression. Man was given priority in creation; and then woman was again subjected to man following her fall. This passage, let it be repeated, should be carefully studied in the light of 1 Cor. 11: 2-16, and *vice versa*. When these two passages are considered together, it is not difficult to see the reason for the relative positions of men and women in the public assembly, and why women are required to give a demonstration of their recognition of the difference.

The penalty for the transgression in Eden, so far as the woman is

concerned, is stated in Gen. 3: 16. This, however, did not affect her final salvation, but it did result in her being relegated to a subordinate position to her husband; or, as in the case of womankind in relation to mankind. (1 Tim. 2: 12-14.) But the woman, though subordinated to man, shall be saved through child-bearing, her divinely assigned sphere

(cf. 1 Tim. 5: 14; Tit. 2: 3-5), rather than a public position in the church. It is possible that there is a reference here to the motherhood of the Saviour. But child-bearing alone will not save the woman; all of them must "continue in faith and love and sanctification with sobriety." (Cf. Heb. 11: 6, 1 John 5: 3; Heb. 12: 14.)

### Questions for Discussion

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

#### Introduction

In what way is prayer related to the Christian life?

In what way would you define prayer?  
What are some promises which God has made regarding prayer?

What is the meaning of modesty?  
Why is a discussion of this question so important?

#### The Golden Text

How do we know that Jesus and Paul taught the same thing regarding prayer?  
What does it mean to pray without ceasing?

What is the crowning blessing of prayer?  
How can we be sure that God's presence is with us throughout the day?

#### The Duty and Privilege of Prayer

For whom should Christian people pray?  
In what ways does Paul speak of our approach to God?

What effect does praying for others have on the worshipper?  
Why does God want his people to pray for rulers?

Why is the course outlined by Paul good and acceptable to God?  
How only can people be saved?

#### The Reason Why Christians Should Pray for All Men

What is the over-all reason for this practice?

Who is a mediator and why is one necessary in the effort to save the human race?

Show why Jesus Christ is the perfect mediator.

#### Rules for Men and Women in Public Worship

Who are the designated leaders of prayers in the public assemblies?

Why are men rather than women given this responsibility?

Why is the relationship of women to men one of subordination?

In what way may we learn how to apply this principle of subordination in public worship?

According to what principles must the salvation of all people be worked out?

What must those who participate in the prayers of the church always be careful about?

What is said regarding the physical adornments of women?

What are the meanings of "shamefastness" and "sobriety"?

What should be the real adornments of women?

Why are such adornments becoming to them?

What does it mean for women to learn in quietness with all subjection?

What two reasons are assigned for this?

Why can't either men or women escape the curses which were placed upon Adam and Eve?

What was the penalty pronounced against the woman?

What promise was made regarding her salvation?

## Lesson III—October 18, 1964

### AN APOSTASY FORETOLD

#### Lesson Text

##### 1 Tim. 4: 1-11

1 But the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons,

2 Through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron;

3 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which

God<sup>1</sup>. created to be received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know the truth.

4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it be received with thanksgiving;

5 For it is sanctified through the word of God and prayer.

6 If thou put the brethren in mind



of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Christ Je'-sus, nourished in the words of the faith, and of the good doctrine which thou hast followed *until now*:

7 But refuse profane and old wives' fables. And exercise thyself unto godliness:

8 For bodily exercise is profitable for a little; but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the

life which now is, and of that which is to come.

9 Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance.

10 For to this end we labor and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe.

11 These things command and teach.

**Golden Text.**—*"And from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them"* (Acts 20: 30.)

**DEVOTIONAL READING.**—2 Thess. 2: 1-12.

## Daily Bible Readings

October 12. M.....	Apostasy Possible (Gal. 5: 1-12)
October 13. T.....	The Vine and the Branches (John 15: 1-10)
October 14. W.....	The Wicked Servant (Luke 12: 41-48)
October 15. T.....	A Warning to Solomon (1 Chron. 28: 1-9)
October 16. F.....	The Devil a Roaring Lion (1 Pet. 4: 1-11)
October 17. S.....	A Description of Apostates (2 Pet. 2: 1-22)
October 18. S.....	Destiny of the Disobedient (2 Thess. 1: 1-9)

**TIME.**—Probably between A. D. 65-67.

**PLACE.**—Paul was in Macedonia, probably in Philippi; Timothy was in Ephesus.

**PERSONS.**—Paul and Timothy.

## Introduction

Apostasies have characterized the Lord's people from the beginning of time. Adam and Eve, in the garden of Eden, led the way; and the example which they set has been followed in all ages of the world. When the human race was less than two thousand years old, the apostasy into which the people had fallen was such as to result in the destruction of everybody, with the exception of Noah and his immediate family—eight people in all! After the new start, following the flood, it was less than a thousand years when Jehovah apparently found only one man he could trust to do his will, and he, accordingly, called Abram to leave his family and homeland, and go to a new location where he could become the head of a new family. And then, less than five hundred years later, the whole family of the chosen people were so completely enslaved in a foreign land, as to be almost wholly alienated from God.

In due time, Moses was sent to liberate the people from Egyptian bondage, and they were brought out into the wilderness where they could be alone, and were given a written

law, so that they could know just exactly what was expected of them. There were six hundred and three thousand and five hundred and fifty men above twenty years of age, and who were able to bear arms, the Levites excluded, who came out of Egypt and into the wilderness; and yet, every single one of them died because of sin, except Joshua and Caleb, within the short space of forty years! In due time Joshua, under the direction of Jehovah, led them into the land of Canaan, but following the death of Joshua and the elders who outlived him, the people again lapsed into apostasy. They continued to serve the gods of the land until in their desperation they called unto Jehovah, and he raised up judges who delivered them out of the hands of those nations that despoiled them. But it was not long until they were back in sin again; and that practice, with repeated deliverances by the judges, was continued throughout the entire period of the judges, until Samuel the prophet, some four hundred and fifty years.

Following the rule of Samuel, the people, in direct opposition to God, demanded a king, so that they might be like the nations about them; and Jehovah told Samuel to grant their wishes: for they were rejecting God and not Samuel. The united kingdom continued for one hundred and twenty years, when it was divided because of sin. The two kingdoms lasted simultaneously for approximately two hundred and fifty-four years, but for the most of the time in rebellion against God, especially in the northern kingdom. Those people were taken into captivity by the Assyrians, and they never returned as a kingdom. The southern kingdom continued for another one hundred and thirty-four years, when they

were taken into captivity by the Babylonians for seventy years; and after that they received permission to return to their homeland. But back at home, they were never faithful for long at the time, and when John the Baptist came it was necessary to call them to repentance before they were ready for Christ. But even at that, they did not respond to the Lord's call, and after a little more than thirty years they killed God's only Son whom he had sent to be their Saviour. Since then, relatively few have accepted the salvation which was made possible for them, and they in time so completely apostatized as to leave no visible trace of the church here upon the earth.

### The Golden Text

***"And from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them"*** The words just quoted are taken from Paul's address to the elders of the church in Ephesus. A fuller statement of the context reads as follows: "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. Wherefore watch ye, remembering that by the space of three years I ceased not to admonish every one night and day with tears." (Acts 20: 28-31.)

Paul apparently was responsible for the actual beginning of the church in Ephesus, possible after some ground work had been done by Aquila and Priscilla. (Acts 18: 18-21; 19: 1-7.) This was probably in A.D. 52, or possibly 53. Paul spent three years of gospel labor in Ephesus, with the result "that all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks." (Acts 19: 10; cf. 20: 31.) The time of these labors was probably A.D. 54-57. The address from which the golden text is taken was delivered in the spring of A.D. 57. It was then that he issued his warning to elders regarding the possibility of an

apostasy—a drawing away of the disciples after those elders who would speak the perverse things. And then shortly A.D. 65 Paul wrote these words to Timothy: "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.)

Thus, in less than ten years Paul's prediction was about to become a reality. "Speaking perverse things" (literally, teaching perversions of the truth—Arndt-Gingrich) is equivalent to ***teaching a different doctrine***. (Acts 20: 30; 1 Tim. 1: 3; cf. Gal. 1: 6, 7.) A different doctrine is a heretical doctrine (1 Tim. 6: 3-5), and the result is certain to be a departure from the word and will of the Lord. The consequences involved in teaching anything different from that which is written are clearly set forth in Paul's statement to the Galatians, already referred to, namely, "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 [that is, change or alter] 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 preacheth unto you any gospel other be anathema. As we have said be- than that which ye received, let him fore, so say I now again, If any man be anathema." (Gal. 1: 6-9.)

## The Text Explained

### A Departure from the Faith Predicted

(1 Tim. 4: 1-5)

*But the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know the truth.. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified through the word of God and prayer.*

In the closing part of the preceding chapter (there were no chapter and verse divisions in Paul's original letter), the apostle says, "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness;

He who was manifested in the flesh,

Justified in the spirit.

Seen of angels,

Preached among the nations,

Believed on in the world,

Received up in glory."

The truths expressed in the closing verse of chapter 3 may be thought of as the "norm of faith," that is, that which men are expected to believe regarding Jesus, and the "but" with which chapter 4 opens is apparently intended to introduce or call attention to the contrast between what men should believe, and what some will accept. We have already seen something of the history of the human race in this respect, and have considered the warning which Paul gave the Ephesian elders regarding the same matters.

When Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians, during his second missionary tour,

he told those brethren that the second coming of Christ would not take place, "except the falling away come first." That fact coupled with the warning now before us, shows that the general tendency which has always characterized the race of men will continue as long as time shall last. "Later times" has reference to the present dispensation, and we have the positive declaration of the Spirit that departures from the faith will be a distinguishing trait of the gospel age. Thus, instead of remaining loyal to the word of God, some will give heed to heretical teachers (seducing spirits, 1 John 4: 1-6), and doctrines inspired by demons. It seems fair to assume from Rev. 2: 2 that Paul's instruction through Timothy must have had a pronounced effect upon the Ephesian brethren; but it should be kept in mind that sound doctrine is not enough, as may be seen in the Lord's letter to the church in Ephesus (Rev. 2: 1-7): love must also fill the heart.

"Through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies" shows that men are the agents through whom the seductive teaching is done, and the doctrine of demons is propagated. Such teachers are false teachers; and while they may claim to preach the truth, they are in reality speaking lies. But the fact that they are characterized by hypocrisy is enough to show that in reality they are not true to the faith which has been delivered to the saints. (Jude 3.) The reason why they can engage in such nefarious work is that their conscience has been branded as with a hot iron. This means that the conscience of such false teachers no longer disturbs them, and that they can go right on teaching falsehood as if it were the truth. (Cf. Tit. 1: 15; 3: 11; Eph. 4: 19.)

The form which the falling away would take, as pictured here by Paul, is described as a spurious asceticism or false spiritualism. Two of the tenets which characterized the false teachers were (1) forbidding to marry, and (2) commanding to abstain from meats. Vincent points

out that these practices were true of the Essenes during the time of Christ, and strong traces of the same practices appeared in the heresy which was condemned by Paul in his letter to the Colossians. That which the Essenes did in the time of Christ and the Colossian heresy were history when Paul wrote to Timothy; but it is clear that the same practices would be continued in the years ahead. Such false austerity gains for its adherents a show of sanctity while they preach error. (Cf. Col. 2: 8, 23.)

Gen. 1: 31 declares that everything which God made was good; and it is still good, if it is received as God intended that it should be. (Cf. Rom. 14: 14.) We also learn from Gen. 9: 1-3 that animal food, that is, meat, was ordained for food for people, although the blood must be removed from it before it is consumed. The ascetic teaching against meat as food is in direct opposition of the plan and purpose of God. The same is true of the prohibition against marriage. (Cf. Gen. 2: 18-24; Heb. 13: 4; 1 Tim. 5: 14, 15.) **However**, in the matter of eating of our daily food, Paul makes it plain that God expects his people to recognize the fact that he is the Giver of all these blessings, and that they are to do that by acknowledging it with thanksgiving. (Cf. Acts 27: 35; 1 Sam. 9: 13; John 6: 11; Matt. 15: 36.) The Lord's people should always offer thanks before eatings, **or** at least sometimes during the time of their eating; for our food is "sanctified through the word of God and prayer."

### The Responsibility of a Good Minister

(1 Tim. 4: 6-9)

*If thou put the brethren in mind of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished in the words of the faith, and of the good doctrine which thou hast followed until now: but refuse profane and old wives' fables. And exercise thyself unto godliness: for bodily exercise is profitable for a little; but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come. Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance.*

Paul explains to Timothy, in this

section of the lesson text, what it means to be a good minister in the Lord's service. The original word for "minister" is the same as the one from which we have the term "deacon;" but its obvious meaning here is *servant*, without any official significance. "These things" refer to that which Paul says in the preceding section of the lesson text, and particularly the things said with reference to the spurious asceticism and the proper attitude toward the use of meat as food for human beings. The original term for "nourished" is a present passive participle, and implies a continuous nutrition on the part of Timothy. That was and is the way to be a good minister of Christ Jesus. That process was not new to Timothy; he had known it from his earliest years. (2 Tim. 1: 5; 3: 15.) "The words of the faith" are the words of the gospel (cf. 1 Tim. 6: 3; 2 Tim. 1: 13), while "the good doctrine" is explanatory of "the faith."

But there are some things to be avoided, as well as some things to do, if one is to be a good minister of the Lord. He must refuse, that is, reject or have nothing to do with, "profane," that is, unhallowed or common, and old wives' fables. These were probably the fictions or inventions "concerning the emanations and orders of the aeons" (Thayer) of the false teachers of Ephesus. They are called "old wives' fables" because they were such as old women regarded as important; but they were profane because they led away from godliness and all that is pleasing to God. Instead of being influenced by these false teachings and practices, Paul urged Timothy, and the same applies to us today, to let his self-discipline be with a view to godliness. In other words, Timothy was exhorted to meet the false asceticism of the heretics by exercising himself in practical piety of the Christian life.

Bible students are not agreed as to the precise meaning which Paul meant to convey by "bodily exercise." Some hold that he was talking about physical exercise, as that expression is generally understood, while others are of the opinion that he referred to the ascetic practices of the false teachers now under consideration. The latter view seems

more reasonable, since that is the subject he was discussing. Paul elsewhere concedes that bodily discipline is profitable as a temporary measure, as one seeks to increase in godliness (Acts 13: 3; 1 Cor. 7: 5, 7; cf. 9: 25-27); but he nowhere teaches that these things are to be regarded as an end within themselves. "Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance" probably refers to that which is said in verse 8; although it is true with reference to all that Paul wrote. (Cf. 1 Tim. 1: 15; 3: 1; Tit. 3: 8.)

### The End in View

(1 Tim. 4: 10, 11)

*For to this end we labor and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe. These things command and teach.*

The labor and striving were with reference to a life of godliness, so that Paul and Timothy might have a life with the Father in heaven; and that should and must be our aim, if we are to succeed in the Christian life. Paul's entire life was but a confirmation of the assertion now before us. "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." (2 Cor. 5: 9, 10.) The words "labor" and "strive" denote strenuous and painful efforts; and when one takes into consideration the significance of the motive of the passage just quoted, he will readily agree that there is no sacrifice too great to make in the service of the Lord. (Cf. Col. 1: 29; 2 Cor. 6: 4-10.)

Paul always had a goal before him, that is, something toward which he worked; and all of his activities were motivated by his hope in the living God. The Lord had saved him from sin, and had promised him a home in heaven; and he had every confidence in that promise, so much so that he was ever ready and willing to suffer for the cause of Christ. "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; cf. Phil. 3: 12.)

God is *potentially* the Saviour of all men, in that he has provided salvation for all men, and has made it plain that he wants all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9); but it is not true that he will save all men, regardless of their attitude toward him. He is *potentially* the Saviour of all men, but he *actually* saves "them that believe." When Jesus sent his disciples out to try to win the world for him, he said, "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.) And then later on Paul said, "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; looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works." (Tit. 2: 11-14.) These passages plainly show that salvation is conditional: God will save all who will do their part, that is, that which they are commanded to do. (Cf. Heb. 5: 8, 9.)

From the standpoint of time, and especially with reference to our coming to the Lord, teaching precedes commanding; but since the term "command" can be used only in relation to fundamentals which have already been recognized and accepted as true, it was proper, of course, for Timothy to command the people in question to heed the things which he taught, and to teach them regarding the consequences which would follow their rejection of the divine injunction. The teacher of God's word is authorized to make known the will of the Lord, and to warn and encourage all who listen to his teaching. Both the teacher and the taught are under tremendous responsibility in this respect. And when professed Christians who know the truth and are not doing

it are within reach, the good minister of Christ Jesus is under obligation

to command and teach them that which the Lord has spoken.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What has been the history of the Lord's people with reference to apostasies?  
Briefly discuss this trend during the first twenty-five hundred years of history.  
What great obligation was placed upon Moses in this respect?  
What was the reaction of the people from Moses to Samuel?  
Discuss their attitude with reference to the kingdoms from Samuel and onward.  
What was the condition of the people when John the Baptist and Jesus came into the world?

### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances did Paul utter the words of this text?  
What are some of the principal facts regarding the church in Ephesus?  
What was the real trouble in the church there?  
Why do people want to teach false doctrines?  
What are the consequences of such teaching?

### A Departure from the Faith Predicted

What was the faith to which Paul has reference in this section of the lesson text?  
How does Paul introduce or call attention to the contrast he is presenting?  
What else did Paul say about a falling away?  
What does he mean by "later times"?  
What indication do we have regarding the possible effect which Timothy's teaching had on the church in Ephesus?  
What was the source of and who were the propagators of the false teaching in Ephesus?

What is signified by the term "hypocrisy"?

How can false teachers continue their nefarious work?

What was the form of the teaching which Paul told Timothy to warn against?

Why forbid to marry and to command to abstain from meats?

What is God's will regarding the use of meats as food for people?

What is the Bible teaching with reference to marriage?

Why is it right for people to give thanks for their food?

### The Responsibility of a Good Minister

What does it mean for one to be a good minister of Christ Jesus?

What "things" did Paul tell Timothy to put them in mind regarding?

What kind of training did Timothy have for his work?

In what way could he be sure of continuous growth?

What were some of the things which he was told to refuse?

What does Paul mean by "bodily exercise"?

In what should our self-discipline consist?

### The End in View

About what did Paul labor and strive?

What is implied by these terms?

Why was Paul such a zealous worker for the Lord?

What is the value of a motive in one's life?

In what sense is God the Saviour of all men?

What does the Bible teach regarding the salvation of the lost?

What does Paul mean by saying, "These things command and teach"?

How can one command before teaching?

What great responsibility rests upon every gospel preacher?

## Lesson IV—October 25, 1964

# CHURCH'S DUTY TO WIDOWS

## Lesson Text

1 Tim. 5: 5-16

3 Honor widows that are widows indeed.

4 But if any widow hath children or grandchildren, let them learn first to show piety towards their own family, and to requite their parents: for this is acceptable in the sight of God.

5 Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, hath her hope set on God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.

6 But she that giveth herself to pleasure is dead while she liveth.

7 These things also command, that they may be without reproach.

8 But if any provideth not for his own, and specially his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.

9 Let none be enrolled as a widow under threescore years old, *having been* the wife of one man,

10 Well reported of for good works; if she hath brought up children, if she hath used hospitality to strangers, if she hath washed the saints' feet, if she hath relieved the afflicted, if she hath diligently followed every good work.

11 But younger widows refuse: for

when they have waxed wanton against Christ, they desire to marry;

12 Having condemnation, because they have rejected their first pledge.

13 And withal they learn also to be idle, going about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.

14 I desire therefore that the

younger *widows* marry, bear children, rule the household, give no occasion to the adversary for reviling:

15 For already some are turned aside after Satan.

16 If any woman that believeth hath widows, let her relieve them, and let not the church be burdened; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"They would that we should remember the poor; which very thing I was also zealous to do"* (Gal. 2: 10.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Mark 14: 1-7.

## Daily Bible Readings

October 19. M.....	God's Concern for the Widow (Ex. 22: 1-22)
October 20. T.....	Provision for Needy (Deut. 10: 12-22)
October 21. W.....	Job's Attitude Toward the Needy (Job 31: 16-23)
October 22. T.....	Wicked Oppress the Widow (Psalm 94: 1-10)
October 23. F.....	Judgment on Hardhearted (Mal. 3: 1-6)
October 24. S.....	Antioch's Assistance (Acts 11: 27-30)
October 25. S.....	Paul's Concern for the Poor (1 Cor. 16: 1, 2)

TIME.—Probably between A. D. 65-67.

PLACE.—Paul was in Macedonia, probably in Philippi; Timothy was in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and Timothy.

## Introduction

The Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments, abounds in teaching regarding God's will for his people with reference to the care of needy people, and especially the widows and the fatherless. (Cf. Deut. 26: 12-15.) James says that "pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in this affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." (James 1: 27.) This is true, whether the reference is to individual Christians, or to the church as a whole; for the church is made up of individual members. But since the lesson for today places the emphasis upon the duty of the church, we shall give primary attention to that phase of the question. When Paul wrote to the churches of Galatia, he said, "So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them are of the household of the faith." (Gal. 6: 10.) "All men" certainly includes widows; and inasmuch as Paul addressed his admonition to the *churches*, we know that we have here instruction regarding the duty of the church as such.

The care of needy widows was the

occasion of one of the early problems in the first church in Jerusalem. "Now in these days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring of the Grecian Jews against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. And the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not fit that we should forsake the word of God, and serve tables. Look ye out therefore, brethren, from among you seven men of good report, full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will continue stedfastly in prayer, and in the ministry of the word." (Acts 6: 1-4.) This saying pleased the entire multitude, and in due time seven men were chosen and placed in charge of the work which needed to be done. This incident suggests three important lessons which should be learned and remembered by all Christians, namely, (1) the needy widows should be cared for; (2) those whose business it is to teach the word of God should not be charged with that responsibility, if there are others who can do the benevolent work; and (3) men should be selected by the

church for that and similar responsibilities.

When a congregation of the Lord's people love him and each other as they should, and are willing to be guided by the will of the Lord as it is revealed in the New Testament, they will be able to deal with any situation which may arise. This does not mean that the Lord has spoken specifically regarding every experience which may come into the life of a group of Christians, but it does mean that the principles set forth in the word of the Lord are applicable

to any situation which may arise. (Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17; 2 Pet. 1: 3.) Many of the examples which are recorded in the New Testament, such as the one referred to in the above paragraph, grew out of situations which were peculiar to the early days of the church; but if we are able to distinguish between a given situation and the application of a New Testament principle to it, we should have no trouble in finding a solution to the problems which arise in our day.

### The Golden Text

*"They would that we should remember the poor; which very thing I was also zealous to do."* When the words of the text just quoted were spoken, Paul already had a record for benevolent work to which he could point. "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 the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul." (Acts 11: 27-30.) "And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministration, taking with them John whose surname was Mark." (Acts 12: 25.)

And then, as new churches were established throughout the Gentile world, Paul taught the spirit of benevolence, and took the lead in the great contribution which was made for the poor in Jerusalem and Judaea. (See 1 Cor. 16: 1-4; 2 Cor., chapters 8, 9; Rom. 15: 25-28.) The idea that one can love the Lord and serve him acceptably while ignoring the needs of his brethren is thoroughly refuted by John in these words: "But whoso hath the world's

goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth." (1 John 3: 17, 18.)

Jesus made it plain throughout his ministry that his sympathy is with the poor; and inasmuch as the work of the church may be looked upon as an extension of his personal ministry here upon the earth, we know that the church must also show its sympathy for the poor. There is, as The Speaker's Bible notes, a Name behind the poor, loud and clear, which compels his people to attend—a Name which forces consideration, a Name which conscience cannot obliterate or ignore. That Name has, by its unconquerable power, brought the poor up out of the darkness and into the light of day. "There they are!" and all Christians, now, must have eyes to see them, and must have ears to hear their cries. "There they are!" and the church cannot go on as if they were not there. Professed Christians may struggle to forget them, or they may think that, in their hurry and heat, they have no time to notice them (cf. Luke 10: 31, 32). But there is, as it were, a voice which arrests them, and which they dare not refuse. "Here are my poor," says Jesus; "and what are you going to do about them?" (Read Matt. 25: 31-46.)

### The Text Explained

*"Widows That Are Widows Indeed"*

(1 Tim. 5: 3-8)

*Honor widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow hath chil-*

*dren or grandchildren, let them learn first to show piety towards their own family, and to requite their parents: for this is acceptable in the sight of*



*God. Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, hath her hope set on God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. But she that giveth herself to pleasure is dead while she liveth. These things also command, that they may be without reproach. But if any provideth not for his own, and, specially his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.*

The Greek verb *timaō*, from which we have the word "honor," is found several times in the New Testament; and if one will read the following passages which contain the term, it will be relatively easy for him to see that it means for one to honor another in the sense of Paul's use of the word now before us. (Mark 7: 10-13; Acts 28: 10; cf. 1 Tim. 5: 17, where the noun form is found.) The idea involves more than respectful treatment; the term also carries with it the idea of financial or material support. The church from the beginning, as we have already seen, recognized its obligation to give proper support to widows who were in need.

The original word for "indeed" is *ontōs*, and it occurs three times in the lesson text for today. There are seven other occurrences in the New Testament. In all instances except the three in the text, the term is used as an adverb, but here, as Vincent points out, "it is preceded by the article and converted into an adjective"—the real *widow*, as Arndt-Gingrich notes, or, as Vincent continues, those "who are *absolutely* bereaved, without children or relations (comp. ver. 4), and have been but once married." Although a widow indeed has no earthly person to look to for support, she does have a Friend; for she has something, demonstrated by her godly life, to commend her to the Lord—she has her hope set on God, and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. God does not turn a deaf ear to a person like this (cf. Isa. 26: 3, 4; Psalm 84: 11; Phil. 4: 6, 7, 19); and he has ordained that his people, the church, should act as his agent in supplying such needs. But if there are close relatives who are able to take care of her needs, the responsibility for meeting them becomes

theirs, rather than that of the church as such.

Over against the real widow who deserves and should receive the support of the church, Paul describes one who is not worthy of such consideration, namely, she that gives herself to pleasure. The word for "pleasure," as used here, is found in only one other place in the New Testament—James 5: 5, where the inspired writer says, "Ye have lived delicately on the earth, and taken your pleasure; ye have nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter." (Cf. Ezek. 16: 49; 2 Pet. 2: 13.) To live in pleasure, then, is to satisfy one's earthly desires, that is, to live for those things which are pleasing to the carnal man. A person like this stands in marked contrast to the one who has "her hope set on God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day." (Cf. Luke 2: 36, 37.) To be dead while one lives is to be dead in spirit, while alive in the flesh. (Cf. Rev. 3: 1.) A widow in this category does not deserve the support of the church, and it would not be right for the congregation to provide such assistance.

The "things" which Paul urged Timothy to command may include all that has been said thus far; but the following verse seems to imply that the reference is that which is stated in verse four. The church as a whole, of course, has a great responsibility, and Paul may have referred to that also. It would be easy for a congregation to be worthy of reproach, if the brethren failed to provide for real widows, or if they pampered idleness by caring for those widows who were giving themselves to pleasure.

The word about one's not caring for his own, and especially those of his own household, apparently, has reference to that which is said in verse 4, where the duty of children or grandchildren is pointed out. The primary reference is to one's own widows, that is, widows of his own household, such as a mother, grandmother, sister, daughter, or other close relative; but the same duty, of course, would be his in the case of any other member of his family who is in need. James 2: 14-26 shows that faith demands works on the part of those who profess to follow the Lord. Any one therefore

who refuses to perform those natural duties which faith requires of him has, for all practical purposes, denied the faith and turned his back upon the gospel of Christ. Such a person is worse than an unbeliever; for an unbeliever, in most instances at least, would care for his needy widows. (Cf. Matt. 5: 46, 47.)

Regulations for Enrolling Widows  
(1 Tim. 5: 9, 10)

*Let none be enrolled as a widow under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, well reported of for good works; if she hath brought up children, if she hath used hospitality to strangers, if she hath washed the saints' feet, if she hath relieved the afflicted, if she hath diligently followed every good work.*

The original word for "enrolled" is *katalegesthō*, the present passive imperative of *katalegō*; and it occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. Its classical meaning, according to Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon, is to pick out, to choose out of many, to enroll, or enlist, to choose as soldiers. The meaning in the text now before us is to enroll in the number or body of widows who are to receive financial support from the church. Some Bible students look upon the word as a technical term, indicating some kind of an official order, and implies that a catalogue or list of such full-time workers was kept by the church. Many students, including Robert Milligan, are of the opinion that verses 9-15 of the text now under consideration set forth inspired instruction regarding deaconesses.

In commenting on the term "deaconess" in Rom. 16: 1 (*diakōnon tēs ekklesiās tēs in Kechreais*) "a deaconess in the church at Cenchreae" (Williams; cf. marginal reading in the American Standard Version), Thayer says, "A woman to whom the care of either poor or sick women was entrusted." Robert Milligan notes that "the diaconate of the primitive church was not confined to male members. Deaconesses were also appointed to attend to the wants of the sick and the needy, especially of their own sex. This is evident from Rom. 16: 1 and 1 Tim. 5: 9-15. This order was continued, in the Greek Church, till about the begin-

ning of the thirteenth century, and it is to be regretted that it was ever discontinued in any church. The poor and the needy will always be with us, and will require the attention of both deacons and deaconesses just as much as they did in the churches of Jerusalem, Cenchrea, and Ephesus." G. C. Brewer notes, "The strongest indication that there were deaconesses in the early church is the language of 1 Tim. 3: 11. Right in the midst of his instructions concerning deacons the apostle says: 'Women in like manner must be grave, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.' 'Women!' What women? Why, those who are appointed to the diaconate. 'In like manner'—the same as the men who are appointed."

There seems to be no doubt regarding the fact that the widows who were enrolled were to receive financial support from the church, and it is also true that the church gave monetary aid to widows that were widows indeed; but there is no reason for saying that a woman could not be a widow indeed before she reached the age of sixty. It is possible for a widow of any age to be "desolate," with no source of income whatsoever. It follows therefore, almost certainly, that those who were enrolled were in a class to themselves, and that there was some type of work which they were expected to do; and what could fit that description better than the work of deaconesses? The high standard of character and conduct would make it practically certain that they would be an asset to the church, rather than a drawback to it. For example, the same principle of the married relationship which applies to elders and deacons, with an even more specific requirement—having been the wife of one man—also applies to the widows who were enrolled. A childless widow could be destitute and in need of financial support; but she was not eligible for the enrollment. A further reason for the lofty standard of Christian character and conduct on the part of those who were qualified for the enrollment will be seen in the following section of the lesson text.

The Reason for Not Enrolling  
Younger Widows  
(1 Tim. 5: 11-16)

*But younger widows refuse: for when they have waxed wanton against Christ, they desire to marry; having condemnation, because they have rejected their first pledge. And withal they learn also to be idle, going about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.*

This portion of the lesson text is rendered by Williams in these words: "Kept the young widows off this roll, for when they get to indulging their lower nature in opposition to Christ, they want to marry, and so deserve censure for breaking their previous pledge. Besides, as they get the habit of gadding about from house to house, they learn to be idle, and not only idle but gossips and busybodies, telling of things they ought not to mention." The original word for "waxed wanton" occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and it means, according to Thayer, "to feel the impulse of sexual desire." This is why they desire to marry; and with that in mind, they would no longer want to give their full time to Christ and the church, which Paul considered to be against Christ, that is, they had turned from that which they had promised to do when they were placed on the church roll. Such a course would naturally result in their self-condemnation, since they failed to live up to their first pledge, or, as Thayer has it, their "plighted faith" which is used of those who can be relied upon to keep their promise.

And, too, such women as Paul is here describing, women without the settled principles which are normally associated with age and experience, and who cannot be depended upon to keep their promise, would give themselves up to idleness. Thus, with nothing which they consider as involving pressing duties, it would be easy for them to *learn* to be idle; and with that kind of attitude, they would find themselves "going about from house to house," with no particular purpose in mind. And as one step usually leads to another, idleness would soon lead to tattling, and that, in turn, would cause them

to become busybodies, that is, busy about other people's affairs; or, as Arndt-Gingrich have it, "paying attention to things that do not concern one, meddlesome, curious," which would lead them to speak things which they ought not. In the words of Theophylact, "They carry the affairs of this house to that, and of that to this: they tell the affairs of all to all." (Cf. 2 Thess. 3: 11.)

I desire therefore that younger widows marry, bear children, rule the household, give no occasion to the adversary for reviling: for already some are turned aside after Satan. The word "therefore" connects this verse with that which has just been said, and that fact makes it certain that Paul is speaking of younger widows, and not younger women in general, as might be inferred from the marginal reading. Younger widows, accordingly, are urged to marry, rather than to assume a position in the church which they might disgrace by the conduct which is described in verses 11-13. (Cf. 1 Cor. 7: 8, 9, 26.) The duties which are specified in the verse which we are now considering are those which go with a normal household; and if they are carefully discharged, there will be no occasion for the adversary to speak reproachfully, who, as Bengel observes, is eager to exaggerate the vices of a few, and to impute them to the whole church and its doctrine. Some of the younger widows, as Paul says, had already yielded to the seductions of Satan; and while he does not specify just what they had done, the implication is that they had been guilty of the sins which he described above.

*If any woman that believeth hath widows, let her relieve them, and let not the church be burdened; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.* The particular manner in which this statement is made may be very suggestive. It may be that the "woman" is one of the younger widows of verse 14 who is urged to marry, rather than to look forward to a religious vocation. Such a person could still be of service to the church and the widows of the congregation by supporting her own widowed relatives, and thereby leave the church free to look after the desolate widows. This does not

mean that the woman in question would have to provide the support alone; but since the wife and mother is usually the one who must look after the dependent members of the household, she, rather than the husband, is called upon to assume the responsibility. And, too, it is possible that the apostle intended for the statement which we are now considering to "wake up" the members of the church, so that they would care for the less fortunate widows, and thereby free the church as such to concentrate on the widows indeed.

Throughout the whole discussion

of the problem of caring for widows, Paul, in keeping with the general teaching of the Scriptures, emphasizes the fact that all Christians, both men and women, who are able to work should have something definite to do, not only to make a living for themselves, but also to contribute to the welfare of others (cf. Eph. 4: 28), and especially those who by the ties of the flesh are dependent upon them. Furthermore, it is the duty of the church, through the overseers, to require all to work and to discharge the duties which they have toward their families and kindred. (See 2 Thess. 3: 10-12.)

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What is the general teaching of the Bible regarding God's attitude toward the poor?  
What is the test of genuine religion?  
How does the question affect both the individual Christian and the church as a whole?  
What disposition did the early church make of the problem of caring for needy widows?  
How may we be sure that we are dealing properly with such questions?

### The Golden Text

How did Paul receive the request the apostles at Jerusalem made to him about the poor?  
What was his general practice in this respect?  
In what way does one's attitude toward the poor affect his standing with the Lord?  
In what way has the Lord made this truth clear to his people?

### "Widows That Are Widows Indeed"

What do we do when we honor widows that are widows indeed?  
Who is a widow indeed?  
What is God's attitude toward such people?  
What is the Lord's way of blessing them?  
What is the Lord's will regarding those who give themselves to pleasure?  
What things did Paul tell Timothy to command, and how could he do that?  
Who are one's "own" whom he is expected to care for?

What is said regarding those who refuse to care for their own? and why is this true?

### Regulations for Enrolling Widows

What widows should the church enroll and what is the meaning of the term "enroll"?  
What reasons can you give for or against the idea of having deaconesses in the church?  
Were only the "enrolled widows" eligible for financial assistance from the church?  
What are the qualifications for a widow who may be enrolled?  
Why was such a lofty standard for such women given?

### Reasons for Not Enrolling Younger Widows

Why were widows below the age of sixty to be rejected from the enrollment?  
Why would the Lord be displeased with such?  
Why would younger widows learn to be idle?  
What kinds of habits would they develop?  
What was Paul's desire regarding the younger widows?  
Why did he feel that way about the matter?  
In what way had some of them already turned aside after Satan?  
Why say, If any woman that believeth hath widows, etc.?  
What was Paul's probable reason for making the statement in verse 16?  
What lesson does Paul emphasize throughout the discussion of caring for needy widows?  
What is the duty of the church toward its members in this respect?

## Lesson V—November 1, 1964

### A CHARGE TO TIMOTHY

#### Lesson Text

#### 1 Tim. 6: 11-21

11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

12 Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called, and didst confess the good confession in the sight of many witnesses.

13 I charge thee in the sight of God, who giveth life to all things, and of Christ Je'-sus, who before Pon'-tius Pi-late witnessed the good confession;

14 That thou keep the commandment without spot, without reproach, until the appearing of our Lord Je'-sus Christ:

15 Which in its own times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;

16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable; whom no man hath seen, nor can see:

to whom be honor and power eternal. A-men'.

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

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

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

20 O Tim'-o-ty, guard that which is committed unto *thee*, turning away from the profane babblings and oppositions of the knowledge which is falsely so called;

21 Which some professing have erred concerning the faith.

Grace be with you.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"If thou put the brethren in mind of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Christ Jesus."* (1 Tim. 4: 6.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Tim. 4: 1-9.

#### Daily Bible Readings

October 26.	M.....	Timothy's Ancestry (Acts 16: 1-5)
October 27.	T.....	Timothy's Religious Background (2 Tim. 1: 3-14)
October 28.	W.....	Help and Comfort for Paul (2 Tim. 4: 9-22)
October 29.	T.....	Paul's Appreciation of Timothy (Phil. 2: 19-30)
October 30.	F.....	Faithfulness Enjoined (1 Tim. 6: 11-21)
October 31.	S.....	General Exhortations (1 Tim. 5: 17-25)
November 1.	S.....	Why Timothy Was Left at Ephesus (1 Tim. 1: 3-11)

TIME.—Probably between A.D. 65-67.

PLACE.—Paul was in Macedonia, probably in Philippi; Timothy was in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and Timothy.

#### Introduction

Paul probably made his trip to Ephesus when he returned from Spain; and when he arrived in the city he found that the predictions which he had long ago uttered to the Ephesian elders regarding the defection of some in their midst were already being fulfilled. (See Acts 20: 28-30.) Heretical teachers were present in the church there when

Paul arrived, and something needed to be done to stop their influence. (Cf. 1 Tim. 1: 3, 4, 18-20.) It is evident from his letters to Timothy and Titus that Paul was hindered by many other duties from remaining in one place as long as his presence was needed. He probably felt that his time was limited, and he was hurrying from place to place in an

effort to accomplish as much as possible before he was called away entirely from the scene of his earthly activities. At any rate, he felt that he should visit Macedonia, and he urged Timothy to remain in Ephesus and endeavor to cope with the situation there.

Our lesson for today is the last in the present series on First Timothy. It was pointed out at the beginning of these studies that Timothy was Paul's son in the gospel, and that he was one of the apostle's most trusted companions in the kingdom of Christ. It was also pointed out in these studies that the church in Ephesus was probably planted by Paul, and, so far as the record is concerned, he remained there longer than at any other place, approximately three years. The letter from which these lessons are taken is relatively short, but it contains much valuable information regarding the training and governing of churches. Paul implies in 1 Tim. 3: 14 that he had not planned to be away from Ephesus and Timothy very long; but it seems that the apostle felt that he should give his son in the gospel some written instructions to aid him in meeting the problems of doctrine, discipline, and church training which were so urgently needed in Ephesus. He also added some personal touches of a natural kind about Timothy's own growth and leadership. Robertson observes that there are wise words in this letter from the greatest of all preachers to a young minister whom Paul loved.

The entire letter which we know as First Timothy might be referred to as Paul's charge to Timothy; it begins with a charge, and it closes with a charge. The church in Ephesus was faced with some great problems, and Timothy was the man whom Paul selected to deliver the instruction which, if followed, would solve all those problems. This letter should be studied in great detail by the leaders of every congregation of the Lord's people, and its truths should be impressed upon every individual Christian. The church in Ephesus was unique in many respects, among the churches of the New Testament. We learn of its beginning in the first part of the nineteenth chapter of Acts; and, as already observed, Paul remained with the brethren for a longer single period than with any other group of Christians. It was during the latter part of this stay that Paul wrote our First Corinthians, one of the greatest letters in all Christian literature. While on his way to Jerusalem from his third missionary journey, and with the collection for the Jerusalem saints, he addressed the Ephesian elders at Miletus. While in his first Roman imprisonment the apostle wrote the letter which we know as Ephesians, a letter which contains some of the profoundest thoughts which ever came through human agency. And finally, the church in Ephesus was the recipient of a letter from the Lord himself. (See Rev. 2: 1-7.)

## The Golden Text

***"If thou put the brethren in mind of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Christ Jesus."*** Inasmuch as our lesson for today has to do with Paul's charge to Timothy, it will probably help us to have before us the full context of the passage just quoted. "If thou put the brethren in mind of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished in the words of the faith, and of the good doctrine which thou hast followed until now: but refuse profane and old wives' fables. And exercise thyself unto godliness: for bodily exercise is profitable for a little; but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the

life which now is, and of that which is to come. Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance. For to this end we labor and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe. These things command and teach. Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an ensample to them that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity. Till I come give heed to reading, to exhortation, to teaching. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Be diligent in these things;

give thyself wholly to them; that thy progress may be manifest unto all. Take heed to thyself, and to thy teaching. Continue in these things; for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee." (1 Tim. 4: 6-16.)

The first part of the quotation just given was a portion of the lesson text for a previous lesson, and nothing more shall be said about it here; but there are several things in verses 12-16 which deserve our careful attention, both preachers and those who hear their message. In saying, "Let no man despise thy youth," the apostle was urging upon Timothy the need for conduct and demeanor which would have a wholesome effect upon his hearers: many of whom, and probably the majority of them, were older in years than he. This is a valuable lesson for all young preachers; for they have a message which all men need to hear. But if their conduct is such as to

make those who hear them feel that they are proud and arrogant, they are certain to call forth resentment from the audience. Instead, the apostle urges that certain steps be taken to avoid such a feeling, namely, set a good example. There is no better way for a young preacher to win the confidence of an older generation, or his contemporaries.

Timothy was also exhorted to give heed to the public reading of the Scriptures, to exhortation, and to teaching. Timothy apparently had some kind of miraculous gift, and he was exhorted not to neglect it. The "presbytery" were the elders. He was told to be diligent, and to devote his entire being to his work; so that the brethren could see the progress that was being made. The preacher must carefully watch himself, and his teaching; for the salvation of both himself and his hearers depend upon that.

## The Text Explained

### Paul's Stirring Appeal to Timothy

(1 Tim. 6: 11-16)

*But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and, follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called, and didst confess the good confession in the sight of many witnesses.*

The expression "man of God" is evidently used in the sense of one who is devoted to the service of God, in contrast to those who are devoted to the affairs of the world. A "man of God" in the Old Testament frequently referred to a prophet, whom God had sent to teach the people. The same expression occurs again in 2 Tim. 3: 17, where its meaning appears to be extended to include any man who is faithful to the Lord. These are the only two instances in which the phrase is found in the New Testament. The "things" which Paul exhorted Timothy to flee were the motive and conduct of the false teachers mentioned in the preceding paragraph, along with the desire to be rich. Some one has said that the love of money in ministers does more to discredit religion in the eyes of ordinary people, than would in-

dulgence in many grosser vices. (Cf. Heb. 13: 5, 6.)

When one is told to flee something, he is usually told which way to go. The proper sense of direction should always be in the mind and heart of the Christian. Many people in their flight from Rome bypass Jerusalem, because they do not know where they are going. But when Paul told Timothy to flee something, he gave him a goal toward which to travel; and told him the traits of character which he needed to make the journey. **Righteousness**, as used here, is a relation to our fellow men, moral rectitude according to God's law. (Cf. Acts 24: 25.) **Godliness** is a relation to God. (Tit. 2: 11, 12.) **Faith**, a fundamental principle of Christianity, is the basis for both righteousness and godliness. When people have genuine faith, they will manifest the proper attitude toward both God and man. **Love**, another fundamental principle of Christianity, is the rule by which faith works. (1 John 5: 3; Gal. 5: 6.) **Patience** is steadfastness. (Rom. 5: 3-5; James 1: 2-4.) **Meekness** is gentleness of strength; patience in the reception of injuries, while believing that God will vindicate us. (Rom. 12: 17-21.)

The use of the definite article in

verse 12 should be observed. *The* good fight of *the* faith; *the* life eternal; *the* good confession. The gospel preacher is not to fight just any fight; he must fight the fight which the faith, that is, the gospel, authorizes. (Cf. 2 Tim. 4: 7.) The life eternal is the life which comes from God. There are two aspects of eternal life set forth in the New Testament, namely, (1) quality, and (2) duration. We lay hold on eternal life when we meet the conditions for its reception; and then seek to guard it until it becomes our eternal possession in heaven. The good confession was evidently the one which he made when he became a Christian, probably in Lystra. (See Acts 14: 8-20; 16: 1-3.) The confession is also made throughout life.

*I charge thee in the sight of God, who giveth life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed the good confession; that thou keep the commandment, without spot, without reproach, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in its own times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable; whom no man hath seen, nor can see; to whom be honor and power eternal. Amen.*

In verse 12, Paul reminded Timothy that there were many *human* witnesses to his confession; but when he made his confession it involved a solemn commitment to God who preserves all things alive (margin), and to Jesus who also witnessed the good confession. The confession which Jesus made was, in effect, his testimony to be the whole truth regarding himself and his mission to the earth, which is summed up, as we know it today, as Christianity. That, too, is what Timothy's confession involved, that is, he bore testimony to the same truth; and what was true in Timothy's case, is also true in ours, and in every other person's case who makes the good confession (cf. Rom. 10: 9, 10.) But it should be noted that the confession in the Roman passage is no more limited to the confession which one makes when he becomes a Christian, than is his faith. The faithful child of God *continues* to believe and to confess his faith in

Christ all through his Christian life. (Cf. Heb. 10: 23; 2 Cor. 9: 13; Heb. 13: 15.) It was under these solemn circumstances that Paul charged Timothy to keep the commandment, faithfully and continuously, as long as he lived. The commandment evidently refers to the whole body of the teaching of Christ, or, which is the same thing, all that which is involved in Christianity. (Cf. Eph. 5: 27; James 1: 27; 1 Thess. 3: 13.)

The reference to "its own times" (the margin has *his*) shows that Paul did not claim to know when the second coming of Christ will take place. (Cf. Matt. 24: 36; Acts 1: 7.) If the plural "times" is significant, the probable meaning is that they involve the successive manifestations and fulfillments which are predicted in such passages as Matt. 24. But when Christ does come it shall then be seen who is the absolute Ruler. The expressions "King of kings," and "Lord of lords" illustrate and emphasize Jehovah's Sovereignty. It appears that all of this was intended to impress upon Timothy's mind the seriousness of the charge which was given to him. No one but God, in the absolute sense of the term, has immortality. He was not derived from or at the will of any other; he is the self-existent One. He alone therefore has endless existence as his nature. (Cf. John 5: 26.) If no one can gaze at the sun, which is but a small part of creation, because of its brightness, heat, and power; how much less can a mortal being look upon God's inexpressible glory! No one in the flesh therefore has ever or can ever see God in the flesh. Our duty and privilege is to glorify and honor him. So may it be!

#### The Responsibility of the Rich

(1 Tim. 6: 17-19)

*Charge them that are rich in this present world, that they be not high-minded, nor have their hope set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the life which is life indeed.*



Paul at this point returned to the subject matter of the charge which he was giving to Timothy; and this is another proof that gospel preachers are responsible for teaching the word of the Lord on all subjects which affect the salvation of people. Preachers are not at liberty simply to choose that which they will discuss, but are under direct obligation to proclaim the full will of the Lord which has been revealed in the New Testament. (See 2 Tim. 2: 2; Acts 20: 24-27; cf. Ezek. 33: 1-16.) Many people will probably be lost because some faithful preacher of the gospel did not tell them the truth. But if the gospel is preached and people fail to heed it, they will know throughout eternity that they have no excuse for their miserable condition. (Cf. Acts 24: 24-27.)

The implication from this section of the lesson text is that there were rich people in the church in Ephesus, and that they needed a very important lesson regarding their attitude toward riches. The New Testament does not teach that it is wrong for a child of God to have material wealth; but it does teach that the wealthy must be governed by the principles of the word of God in their use of their riches. Wealth must always be regarded by Christians, not as a master or an end in and of itself, but as a servant—something to be used for the glory of God and the highest good of society, and especially the household of the faith. (Cf. Gal. 6: 10; Luke 16: 9-31.) It is any easy thing for those who have great wealth to feel secure in their riches. But Jesus teaches that it is utterly impossible for one to trust in God and in riches at the same time. (Matt. 6: 19-24.) Furthermore, it is a well known fact that devotion to any object or cause will leave an indelible mark upon the character of the devotee. And if the treasure of the person is subject to deterioration, the heart which is in it will likewise be subject to the same fate.

The Bible plainly teaches that God is the Giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1: 17), and Jesus makes the solemn promise that if his people seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, they then may depend upon God for the material blessings which they need (Matt. 6:

33). It is God's will therefore that his people put their trust in him, and not on the uncertainty of riches; for no one can be certain that his riches, however secure he may think them to be, are going to continue with him. (Cf. Prov. 23: 5; Luke 12: 16-21.) God does not give us earthly blessings simply for possession and as a source of pride; but that we may enjoy them according to his will, and therefore use them as we should.

The section of the lesson now before us sets forth God's plan for the right use of riches (see again Gal. 6: 10; cf. Eph. 4: 28). The marginal reading for "willing to communicate" is *ready to sympathize*; and when those who have the means to do with follow this rule, they are making for themselves "friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when it shall fail, they may receive you into eternal tabernacles." (Luke 16: 9.) This is what Paul means by saying that such people are "laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the life which is life indeed." (See again Matt. 6: 19-21.) Both Christ and Paul emphasize the fact that Christians must keep first in their minds the things which are of supreme importance: and inasmuch as they are children of eternity, rather than of time, it is the height of folly for them to devote their strength to the gathering of treasures which cannot be converted into the currency of the country to which they are going. One way to lay hold on eternal life—the real life—is to use aright that which we have in our possession.

### A Final Plea to Timothy for Faithfulness

(1 Tim. 6: 20, 21)

O Timothy, guard that which is committed unto thee, turning away from the profane babblings and, oppositions of the knowledge which is falsely so called; which some professing have erred concerning the faith. That which had been committed to Timothy was the truth of the gospel, including that which is contained in the letter we have been studying. This was a noble heritage, and he was under obligation

to guard this trust carefully, that is, to allow no changes to be made in it, and to see to it that it was properly used and passed on to others. If he should fail in this, he would be depriving others of a possession which is absolutely essential to eternal life. This is a lesson which every gospel preacher should always keep before him. It is the same responsibility which is seen in the exhortation which Jude gave. "Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints." (Jude 3.)

The gospel message was duly proclaimed by the Lord's chosen messengers, and it will never be changed, except by false teachers; and that perverted gospel cannot save the soul of a single individual. (Cf. Gal. 1: 6-9.) Anything which is different from the teaching of the New Testament is "knowledge which is falsely so called," and unless men of faith and integrity see to it that the message of truth is kept intact, no one can be sure that he is doing that which the Lord commands. There was never a greater responsibility given to any man, than that of guarding the truth. In his final letter to his beloved son in the gospel, the aged apostle said, "And the things which thou hast heard from

me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." (2 Tim. 2: 2.) But that alone, great as the task is, is not enough. False teachers must be warned, and false teaching exposed. "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.)

*Grace be with you.* This form of benediction is used by Paul in one other place, Col. 4: 18. The original word for "you" in the text now before us is plural, but that, according to Greek scholars, is not sufficient to prove that the epistle as a whole was intended for the entire church at Ephesus. Moulton says that "the study of papyri letters will show that the singular and the plural alternated in the same document with apparently no distinction of meaning." The Interpreter's Bible thinks that the use of the plural in the case now under consideration may have been intended to show that "Timothy," the individual to whom the letter was addressed, is made to stand for the younger ministry, and through it, for the entire church. At any rate, all young ministers of the gospel, and older ones too, can take the lesson to themselves.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

Against what kind of background did Paul give the charge of this lesson to Timothy?

What was Paul's general feeling for Timothy?

Why did the apostle write the letter from which this lesson is taken?

What is the principal value of the letter to us?

Tell something of the place which the church in Ephesus had in the life of Paul.

### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances did Paul write the words of this text?

What did he mean by telling Timothy to let no man despise his youth?

How can a young preacher keep a thing like that from happening to him?

What are some of the other lessons which Paul impressed upon Timothy in the context of the golden text?

### Paul's Stirring Appeal to Timothy

What is signified by the expression "man of God"?

What "things" did Paul exhort Timothy to flee?

What effect does the love of money generally have in ministers?

What else did Paul tell Timothy to do in addition to fleeing?

Discuss the traits of character which the apostle exhorted him to cultivate.

What use of the definite article did Paul make in verse 12?

What two aspects of eternal life are set forth in the New Testament?

What was the good confession which Timothy confessed?

How often should the confession be made? Give reasons for your answer.

Under what solemn circumstances did Paul give his charge to Timothy?

What commandment did he exhort him to keep?

What did Paul say would happen when Christ comes?

How is the greatness of God pictured?

The Responsibility of the Rich

What great responsibility is placed upon  
gospel preachers?  
What did Paul tell Timothy to tell the  
rich regarding their wealth?  
Is it right for Christians to be wealthy?  
Give reasons for your answer.  
In what way should wealth always be  
regarded?  
Why is it unwise for people to trust in  
riches? In whom should they place  
their trust?  
What promise has the Lord made to his  
people regarding the essentials of life?

A Final Plea to Timothy  
for Faithfulness

What was Timothy told to guard?  
How can a gospel preacher do this?  
Why is it so important to guard the truth  
of the gospel?  
In what way may the gospel be changed?  
What else must gospel preachers do in  
addition to guarding the truth of the  
gospel?  
What benediction did Paul pronounce  
upon Timothy?

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Lesson VI—November 8, 1964

PAUL WRITES A SECOND LETTER TO TIMOTHY

Lesson Text

2 Tim. 1: 1-12

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Je'-sus through the will of God, according to the promise of the life which is in Christ Je'-sus,

2 To Tim'-o-ty, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, peace, from God the Father and Christ Je'-sus our Lord.

3 I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers in a pure conscience, how unceasing is my remembrance of thee in my supplications, night and day

4 Longing to see thee, remembering thy tears, that I may be filled with joy;

5 Having been reminded of the unfeigned faith that is in thee; which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lo'-is, and they mother Eu-ni-ce; and, I am persuaded, in thee also.

6 For which cause I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee through the laying on of my hands.

7 For God gave us not a spirit of

fearfulness; but of power and love and discipline.

8 Be not ashamed therefore of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but suffer hardship with the gospel according to the power of God;

9 Who saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Je'-sus before times eternal,

10 But hath now been manifested by the appearing of our Saviour Christ Je'-sus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

11 Whereunto I was appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher.

12 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.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"As a child serveth a father, so he served with me in furtherance of the gospel (Phil. 2: 22.)*

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Tim. 1: 13-18.

Daily Bible Readings

November 2. M..... The Salutation (2 Tim. 1: 1, 2)  
November 3. T..... Why Paul Suffered (2 Tim. 1: 7-14)  
November 4. W..... Disciples Faithful and Unfaithful (2 Tim. 1: 15-18)  
November 5. T..... Paul's Message from the Lord (Gal. 1: 1-12)  
November 6. F..... Inspiration of Paul's Writings (1 Cor. 2: 1-16)  
November 7. S..... Grievous Times Ahead (2 Tim. 3: 1-17)  
November 8. S..... Suffering as a Good Soldier (2 Tim. 2: 1-13)

TIME.—A.D. 68.

PLACES.—Paul was in Rome; Timothy was in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and Timothy.

## Introduction

So far as any one knows, this is the last letter which Paul wrote before he went to be with Jesus. His second letter to Timothy is more personal than the first. The apostle felt that his race had been run, the fight was over, but, thank God, he had kept the faith. (See 2 Tim. 4: 6-8.) Timothy, his beloved son in the gospel, was probably still in far away Ephesus, but Paul felt that he must see him; and it is probable that the apostle sent Tychicus to relieve Timothy, so that the latter could feel freer to make the long trip to Rome, where Paul was bound in prison. But in case Timothy should not reach him before Paul was forced to leave his mortal body, he sent his second letter to his son in the gospel to him in Ephesus. It contains the final advice of a father to his son in the faith, a son who apparently was naturally sensitive and timid, who had to be left behind to face the hardship involved in opposing the heresies which threatened to destroy the very essence of Christianity. In commenting on the contents of this letter, Conybeare and Howson observe that "no summary of its contents can give any notion of the pathetic tenderness and deep solemnity of this epistle."

We learn from Tit. 3: 12 that Paul had planned to spend the winter in Nicopolis, apparently the Nicopolis in Epirus on the western seacoast of ancient Greece. It is not definitely known whether or not he ever reached that city, but he probably did. Some students of the life of Paul think that he may have been arrested in Troas in the house of Carpus, where, in the hurry of departure, he left his cloak, books, and parchments mentioned in 2 Tim. 4:

13. Many students, however, are of the opinion that Paul did reach Nicopolis, and probably was arrested there during mid-winter. No one knows what the specific charges against him were; but he would almost certainly "be regarded as an offender against the law which prohibited the propagation of a new and illicit religion (*religio nova et illicita*) among the citizens of Rome."

Paul's purpose in writing Second Timothy has been admirably summed up, or so it seems, by Lock, in *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*, in the following words: "But Timothy was of a timid nature, and the journey was one which would imply peril, and possibly he may arrive too late to see St. Paul, or may have to face death himself; so he exhorts him to have courage and to provide others who will be able to teach the truth, and warns him against the special dangers which are likely to beset his teaching. The interest of the epistle oscillates between St. Paul's desire for sympathy and his wish to strengthen Timothy's hands and to guard the deposit of the truth." But when Paul wrote this letter to Timothy, he was not only chained, but was also treated as a malefactor. (2 Tim. 2: 9.) It appears from 2 Tim. 4: 16, 17 that Paul had to submit to a preliminary investigation, after which he was evidently sent back to his prison cell. It seems that no Christian ventured to stand by the aged apostle during this first trial, so perilous was it to show any public sympathy for him; and when the final stage of his trial was approaching, he looked forward to death as his certain sentence. (2 Tim. 4: 6.)

## The Golden Text

**"As a child serveth a father, so he served with me in furtherance of the gospel."** It is generally conceded by Bible students that Timothy was converted by Paul, during the latter's first great missionary journey, probably in Lystra which seems to have been his home. (Acts 16: 1, 2: 20: 4.) This young disciple of Christ was probably a witness of the terrible sufferings which Paul endured while in Lystra (Acts 14: 19,

20), and he evidently knew about the apostle's other sufferings which came upon him while he was in that section of the country (2 Tim. 3: 10, 11; Acts 14: 21, 22). All of this must have made a profound impression upon Timothy's tender heart. It is doubtful if any of Paul's companions and fellow-workers had a greater place in his affections and esteem than Timothy. This young evangelist shared the great apostle's out-

ward labors and intimate thoughts. It appears that Timothy was associated with his spiritual father during a longer period of time, than any of Paul's other companions.

The association of Paul and Timothy in the furtherance of the gospel began when the latter was chosen to accompany Paul and Silas on their second missionary journey. He was probably selected to take the place which John Mark had during the beginning of the first journey. (Acts 13: 4, 5, 13.) Timothy was active in preaching, represented Paul in some special assignments, and joined him in sending several of the letters which have come down to us. The great apostle to the Gentiles never paid greater tribute to any of his fellow-workers, as was pointed out in an earlier lesson, than the one he penned regarding Timothy. It is from this passage that the words of the golden text are taken. "But I hope in the Lord to send Timothy shortly unto you, that I may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will care truly for your state. For they all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a child serveth a father, so he served with

me in furtherance of the gospel." (Phil. 2: 19-22.)

Timothy was with Paul when the latter could not or would not have the companionship of others. He was charged with some of the most important tasks which could be delegated to other men by the apostle; and when the Lord's great ambassador was in his last lonely imprisonment, it was Timothy whom he summoned to console him, and to receive his last injunctions. Truly, "as, a child serveth a father, so he served with me in furtherance of the gospel." In commenting on the relationship between Paul and Timothy, Hastings says that "the friendship between these two men, so unequal in years and so different in powers, is one of the most suggestive episodes in the early history of the gospel. It was apparently the one mellowing affection that toned down the impassioned vigor of St. Paul; that bound him tenderly to life, and, when he would spring to grasp the heavenly crown, recalled him with a sigh; that mingled a constant human image with his prayers and brought them trembling on his voice; that, homeless as he was, made him feel amid his wanderings, the sadness of absence and of loneliness."

## The Text Explained

### The Salutation

(2 Tim. 1: 1, 2)

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, according to the promise of the life which is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*

It is well to notice the difference in the wording of the salutation in the two letters to Timothy. In the first, Paul says that he was an apostle of Christ Jesus "according to the commandment of God our Saviour;" in the second, "an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God." Thus, the "commandment" of God is the "will" of God. In the first, "and Christ Jesus our hope;" while in the second, "according to the promise of the life which is in Christ Jesus." Our "hope" is based on the "promise" of the life which is in Christ Jesus. Christianity therefore is not a shallow optimism, but in-

volves a well-grounded hope which is based on the truth which God has revealed in Christ Jesus. When Paul wrote to the Galatians he said, "But when it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb, and 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." (Gal. 1: 15, 16.) It was according to the sovereign will of God therefore, and not in any sense according to the will of men, that Paul became an apostle of Jesus Christ. (Cf. Acts 22: 14, 15; 26: 16-18; Gal. 1: 11, 12.)

The "life" which is in Christ Jesus is, of course, eternal life; and that should always be the concern of the child of God. It cannot be emphasized too often that there are two aspects of eternal life revealed in the New Testament, namely, its duration and its quality. We must possess the quality of eternal life

here and now, if we expect to realize its duration in the world to come. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning his Son. And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life. These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God." (1 John 5: 10-13; cf. 3: 14; Col. 3: 1-14.) The life which is in Christ is eternal; and inasmuch as he is our life, we have eternal life, that is, in quality, as we live the Christian life. This should be a great motive as we endeavor to live for Christ; for if we realize the value of our possession, we certainly want to save it eternally in the world to come.

### Timothy's Fitness for the Ministry

(2 Tim. 1: 3-7)

*I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers in a pure conscience, how unceasing is my remembrance of thee in my supplications, night and day longing to see thee, remembering thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; having been reminded of the unfeigned faith that is in thee; which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and in thy mother Eunice; and, I am persuaded, in thee also. For which cause I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee through the laying on of my hands. For God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness; but of power and love and discipline.*

Paul's reference to his forefathers implies that his God-fearing life was the result of the training and example which they gave and set before him. Goodspeed renders the passage in these words, "I thank God, whom I, like my forefathers, worship with a clear conscience." It was for this reason that Paul could truthfully say, "Brethren, I have lived before God in all good conscience until this day (Acts 23: 1)," and, "herein I also exercise myself to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men always." (Acts

24: 16). This was true because he always did that which he believed to be right. He was terribly wrong at times; but he never failed to change his course immediately and completely, when he saw that he was wrong. (Cf. his action when Christ met him on the Damascus road.)

It was characteristic of Paul to pray for his brethren (cf. Rom. 1: 8-10; Eph. 1: 15, 16; Phil. 1: 3-11; 1 Thess. 1: 2, 3; Phile. 4-6); and it is interesting to observe that in each of the cases cited, including the one now under consideration, that direct mention is made of the faith of those for whom the prayers were offered, except that of the Philippians, and it is implied there. The close attachment which Paul and Timothy had for each other, along with the devotion which the latter demonstrated for the work of Christ, would cause the apostle to maintain an unusual interest in his son in the gospel. It was pointed out earlier in these studies that Timothy apparently was naturally timid; and when Paul recalled the tears which he had seen his child in the faith shed, he could not help but remember him before the throne of grace. Those tears had touched Paul deeply, and had increased the tender feeling which he had for him; and he continuously longed to see him, for he knew that such an experience would fill him with joy.

But it was evidently Timothy's faith which counted most with Paul, the faith which made Timothy the kind of man he was. It should be noted, however, that the faith which was Timothy's did not come by chance; it was deep-rooted and owed much of its stability to maternal training and example. In the language of The New English Bible, "I am reminded of the sincerity of your faith, a faith which was alive in Lois your grandmother and Eunice your mother before you, and which, I am confident, lives in you also." Such a faith can come to one only as the result of diligent teaching and steadfast devotion to the truth. "But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a babe thou hast known the scared writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith

which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. 3: 14, 15.) The things which Timothy had learned, as indicated here, were the things which had been taught him by his mother, his grandmother, and his father in the gospel.

We are not specifically told what the gift of God was which Timothy had, and which he was exhorted to stir up; but when the passage now before us is read in the light of other references to Timothy's work, it will be seen to be probable that the reference was to his being set apart to the work of an evangelist. (Cf.

1 Tim. 1: 18; 4: 14.) It was the voice of prophecy which had led the way to Timothy, that is, which pointed him out as a person suitable for the work of an evangelist; and that voice may have been that of Silas. (See Acts 15: 32, 40; 16: 1-3.) It was probably when Timothy was selected for the work that Paul and the elders laid their hands upon him, which was the practice of the early church. (Cf. Acts 13: 3; 6: 6.) If there was some miraculous gift or power given to Timothy, it was, of course, limited to the age of miracles. (Cf. 1 Cor. 13: 8; Eph. 4: 11-13.) It should be observed that God bestows the gift, but human effort is required to keep it alive.

The responsibility of Timothy was great, and his assignment tremendous; and it was no doubt for those reasons that Paul gave him the encouragement which is implied in verse 7. "For God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness; but of power and love and discipline." The term "fearfulness" has the same meaning as that of *cowardice*. (See Rev. 21: 8; cf. Luke 12: 4, 5.) And so Timothy must not, under any circumstance, fail to declare the whole counsel of God. (2 Tim. 4: 1-5.) This encouragement would be especially apropos, in view of the fact that he would not long have Paul with him in person to guide him through difficult situations. (Cf. 1 Tim. 1: 3, 4.) The "power" referred to here, according to Vincent, does not mean power to work miracles, but rather to the ability to overcome all obstacles (cf. 1 Cor. 10: 13); and verse 8 of the lesson text seems to confirm this idea. "Love" is the quality which never allows one to lose sight of the goal toward which he is

working, namely, the glory of God and the salvation of souls. "Discipline," as used here, means self-control, or, as practically applied, a man of prudence and discretion. Thus, if Timothy will not be afraid, but will remember that God supplies the power to overcome, the love to motivate, and the incentive to a successful ministry, he will be the kind of evangelist which will glorify God, and be a blessing to his fellow men.

### An Exhortation to Faithfulness in the Discharge of His Duties

(2 Tim. 1: 8-12)

*Be not ashamed therefore of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but suffer hardship with the gospel according to the power of God; who saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal, but hath now been manifested by the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, whereunto I was appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher. 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.*

The term "therefore" connect the statement which has just been quoted with the preceding section of the lesson text, and shows Timothy what is expected of him as a result of his having received from God the spirit of power, love, and discipline. Paul was a prisoner at the time he wrote this letter to Timothy, and the gospel which he preached was held in disrepute by many. Some of the brethren were not able to overcome this great obstacle, and as a result they had deserted the apostle (cf. 2 Tim. 4: 16-18); and he was very anxious that this would not happen to Timothy. Paul, accordingly, called upon his beloved son in the faith to suffer hardship with the gospel according to the power which God had given to him for that purpose. To suffer hardship with the gospel means to suffer persecution for its sake. (Cf. 2 Tim. 2: 3, 9; 4: 5.) The motive

for all of this is stated in verse 9: "who saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal." (Cf. Tit. 3: 5.) This is a lesson we all need today, for there is no substitute for the gospel of Christ; it needs to be proclaimed faithfully.

We should notice the manner in which Paul speaks of God's eternal purpose, and the way in which it was accomplished. Or, to state the same thing in another way, there is a contrast between the *preparation* to bring us the great blessings mentioned in verse 9, and the *actual accomplishment* of our salvation as the result of the coming of Christ. "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; looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works." (Tit. 2: 11-14.)

Christ abolished death for his people in the sense that he removed the sting from it, and made it of non-effect so far as their eternal destiny is concerned. (Cf. 1 Cor. 15: 54-58; Heb. 2: 14, 15.) The complete and final abolition of death will take place when Christ comes again at the end of the world. (Rev. 20: 14.) Along with the abolition of death, Christ brought to light, that is, made clear to all (Thayer), the doctrine of life and immortality by means of the gospel. It would be extremely difficult for any gospel preacher, or any

Christian, to become faithless, so long as he keeps before him the motives to faithfulness which are set forth in verses 8-10 of the lesson text now under consideration. Paul's example of faithfulness to his commission (verse 11; cf. 1 Tim. 2: 7) is also an inspiration to those who want to follow the teaching of Christ.

Paul never asked others to do that which he was unwilling to do. His suffering for Christ is a classic example; and it was a great day for him when he could say, "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: 7, 8.) Paul was not ashamed of the testimony of Christ under any and all conditions (Rom. 1: 16); and that was the way he wanted Timothy to feel, and the same goes for us.

Paul knew what he was talking about; for he had put the matter to the test. Faith in religion is something like an experiment in science. It is not the thoughtless swallowing of dogma, but the reverent testing of a profession. It is the proving of that which God has spoken. (Cf. Mal. 3: 10.) The ultimate ground of Christian certainty therefore lies in the facts of Christian experience. Every thoughtful person knows something of the value and authority of experience in other fields; and why not come to realize its importance in the Christian life? There is no certainty so absolute as that which comes through experience. Paul committed his all to the Lord, and he had learned by experience that he can be relied upon to guard that which is placed in his keeping.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place and persons.

### Introduction

Under what circumstances did Paul write his last letter to Timothy?

How does this letter compare with the first letter to Timothy?

Under what conditions did Paul apparently return to the Roman prison?

What was Paul's principal purpose in writing the second letter to Timothy?

What was the apostle's situation at the time of the writing?

### The Golden Text

When and where did Timothy likely become Paul's son in the gospel?

When did they become associated in the work of preaching the gospel?

How did Paul feel toward him in such work?

Discuss their general relationship toward the end of Paul's life upon the earth.

### The Salutation

Discuss the two salutations in Paul's letters to Timothy—compare, contrast.

How do we know that the commandment of God is the will of God?



Why is it that Christianity offers such high hopes to its adherents?  
Under what circumstances did Paul become an apostle of Christ?  
What is the New Testament teaching regarding eternal life?  
What kind of impression should this make on us?

### Timothy's Fitness for the Ministry

What is implied in Paul's reference to his forefathers?  
How could the apostle always have a clear conscience?  
Why did Paul pray constantly for his brethren?  
What lesson should we learn from this?  
How did Timothy come to have such great faith, and what was Paul's estimate of it?  
What gift did Timothy have and how could he stir it up?  
What spirit does God give his people as it respects their work for him?  
What is meant by fearfulness? Power? Love? Discipline?

How should gospel preachers and all Christians regard these traits?

### An Exhortation to Faithfulness in the Discharge of His Duties

What is the force of the term "therefore" in verse 8?  
What temptation would Timothy probably have to be ashamed of Paul and the gospel?  
What does it mean to suffer hardship for the gospel?  
What motive is given for suffering for the gospel's sake?  
What is the great motive behind our salvation?  
In what way is our salvation made possible?  
How did Christ abolish death for his people?  
What did he bring to light through the gospel?  
What personal example did Paul set before Timothy and what of its effectiveness?  
What great assurance does Christ offer to all of us?

## Lesson VII—November 15, 1964

### STRENGTH IN GRACE

#### Lesson Text

#### 2 Tim. 2: 1-13

1 Thou therefore, my child, be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Je'-sus.

2 And the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

3 Suffer hardship with *me*, as a good soldier of Christ Je'-sus.

4 No soldier on service entangleth himself in the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier.

5 And if also a man contend in the games, he is not crowned, except he have contended lawfully.

6 The husbandman that laboreth must be the first to partake of the fruits.

7 Consider what I say; for the Lord

shall give thee understanding in all things.

8 Remember Je'-sus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel:

9 Wherein I suffer hardship unto bonds, as a malefactor; but the word of God is not bound.

10 Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Je'-sus with eternal glory.

11 Faithful is the saying: For if we died with him, we shall also live with him:

12 If we endure, we shall also reign with him: if we shall deny him, he also will deny us:

13 If we are faithless, he abideth faithful; for he cannot deny himself.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth"* (2 Tim. 2: 15.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Tim. 2: 14-26.

### Daily Bible Readings

November 9. M.....Strength Through Christ (Phil. 4: 10-20)  
November 10. T.....Riches of Grace (Eph. 1: 1-7)  
November 11. W.....Grace of God Sufficient (2 Cor. 12: 1-9)  
November 12. T.....The God of all Grace (1 Pet. 5: 1-10)  
November 13. F.....Mercy at the Throne of Grace (Heb. 4: 1-16)

November 14. S..... Strength Through Weakness (2 Cor. 11: 16-30)  
 November 15. S..... More Than Conquerors (Rom. 8: 31-39)

TIME.—A.D. 68.

PLACES.—Paul was in Rome; Timothy was in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and Timothy.

## Introduction

It requires strength to accomplish any great task, and what greater work is there to be done than that which has been given to a faithful gospel preacher? If one has any doubt about this, let him follow the life of the apostle Paul, aside from his inspiration, and be convinced. Christianity, at the time of Paul's conversion, was limited almost entirely to the Jewish race; but when the time came for him to join the redeemed who had finished their work on the earth, it was a world-religion. There were others who carried the gospel to other nations, but their work is almost lost sight of in the brighter glory of Paul's achievements. It was through his powerful leadership, and untiring labors, that the early Christian movement developed into an international brotherhood. His indefatigable journeys about the Eastern Empire, his missionary preaching, often in the face of bitter opposition and much personal violence, his pioneering spirit, which led him to preach Christ in regions where he had not been proclaimed before, created before the minds of his Christian contemporaries, and those of future generations, the classic figure of the gospel preacher and Christian missionary.

On one occasion when Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, he said regarding those who were trying to destroy his character and his work, "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 wil-

derness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in labors and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches." (2 Cor. 11: 23-28.)

How could Paul live through all of those things, and still accomplish so much. Let him give the answer: "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me." (Phil. 4: 13; cf. Deut. 33: 25.) This passage is rendered in The New English Bible in these words: "I have strength for anything through him who gives me power," while The Twentieth Century New Testament puts it this way: "I can do everything in the strength of him who makes me strong!" The Speaker's Bible points out that "in touch with this Divine power we have confidence in attempting even the most difficult things that Christ calls upon us to do. We may be content to know that he makes no mistake in his calls. He calls us to do a thing which seems beyond us; or a thing which is directly contrary to our bent and to our particular capacity, and yet he makes us see that in him we shall do it, or rather he will do it in us. If a call comes to us and we are tempted to decline it on account of our unfitness let us not put it aside too rapidly. It may be this call that is to be the occasion of our getting into the secret of God's power. If we are sure that he calls us we shall find that, powerless as we are in ourselves, we have discovered exactly this point that the apostle dwells on; 'all strength is mine, I am empowered.'" If God calls on you to forgive, can you do it? (Matt. 6: 14, 15.) If he calls upon you to help preach the gospel, can you do it? (Mark 16: 15; cf. Col. 1: 23.) If he calls upon you to be a faithful Christian, can you do it? (Matt. 28: 20; cf. Col. 1: 9-14.)

## The Golden Text

*"Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that*

*needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth."* The word

"diligence" means to exert oneself, to endeavor, to make an effort. Exhortations involving the original of this term are found frequently in the New Testament. It is used in the sense of "endeavor" in 1 Thess. 2: 17. "But we, brethren, being bereaved of you for a short season, in presence not in heart, *endeavored* the more exceedingly to see your face with great desire." This gives some idea of the zeal involved in such efforts. (Cf. Eph. 4: 3; 2 Pet. 1: 10, 15; 3: 14; Gal. 2: 10.) The diligence which Paul urged Timothy to manifest was intended to accomplish a definite purpose, namely, "to present thyself approved unto God." It does not make any difference how much is accomplished by one's diligent efforts, it will amount to nothing, if it does not please God. Jesus gives a classic example of this truth in Matt. 7: 21-23. "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." (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 9.)

"A workman that needeth not to be ashamed." The original for "needeth not to be ashamed" is found nowhere else in the new Testament, and the idea is that of a workman whose work does not disgrace him (Vincent), or which does not cause him to suffer shame. (Cf. the work of a skilled craftsman, a farmer, or any one else.) When one's work is approved by those who are competent

to judge, then he has nothing for which he should be ashamed. In the case now before us, it is God who must approve the activities of the workman (preacher), and that is done only when God's will is accomplished. In the words of the psalmist, "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." (Psalm 119: 5, 6.)

The original word for "handling aright" (*orthotomeō*) likewise occurs in the New Testament only one time, but the ideas surrounding it, so far as commentators are concerned, are many. Vincent notes that various homiletic fancies have been founded on the word, as, to *divide* the word of truth, giving to each hearer what he needs: or, to separate it into its proper parts: or, to separate it from error: or, to cut straight through it, so that its inmost contents may be laid bare." Various translations have these renderings: "who properly presents the message of truth" (Williams); "who knows how to use the word of truth to the best advantage" (Goodspeed); "accurate in delivering the message of truth" (Twentieth Century); "to teach the truth correctly and directly" (Thayer); "guide the word of truth along a straight path (like a road that goes straight to its goal), without being turned aside by wordy debates or impious talk" (Arndt-Gingrich). Paul's evident meaning is found in holding the pattern of sound words (2 Tim. 1: 13); guarding the truth (2 Tim. 1: 14); preaching the truth fully and completely at all times and to all people (2 Tim. 4: 1-4); and suffering for it (2 Tim. 1: 8).

## The Text Explained

The Way to Faithfulness  
(2 Tim. 2: 1-3)

*Thou therefore, my child, be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things which thou hast learned from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.*

The greater part of chapter 1 was devoted by Paul to exhortations to

Timothy to faithfulness. As already pointed out, Paul was soon to leave his son in the faith in a sinful world, and in the midst of false teachers; and it would be exceedingly essential that Timothy take every necessary precaution regarding his own life and his teaching. At the close of the chapter the apostle presents a contrast between those who desert the truth and those who are steadfast, not only to the truth but to those who preach it; and then with the beginning of chapter 2, Paul resumes his

exhortations to Timothy. After showing that it is possible for good men to fall away from the favor of God, Paul wants Timothy to remember the source of the power which is able to make him strong; and what was true of Timothy is also just as true of us today. If we want to become and remain strong, we must be in touch with the power which alone is sufficient for that purpose. (Cf. Eph. 3: 14-19.) The loyal gospel preacher, as well as the faithful Christian, lives in the grace which has been provided by Christ, and which is in Christ; and he can remain strong only by abiding or continuing in that grace. The passive construction ("be strengthened") does not imply that we are passive in the reception of influence from without; instead, the act of reception involves our cooperation with God. The power we need is available, but we must keep in touch with it; and if we do, we shall be strengthened. If we abide in Christ, then he will abide in and strengthen us. (Cf. Rom. 4: 20; Eph. 6: 10; Phil. 4: 13.)

The "things" which Timothy had received from Paul were the fundamental truths of the gospel, and they had been received in the presence of many witnesses, who would be ready to confirm that which was said by the apostle. Those witnesses therefore were not mere spectators, but men who were ready and willing to testify to the truthfulness of the gospel message. And Timothy was urged to commit, that is, deposit in trust, that which he had learned from Paul, to faithful men; so that the teaching of the truth may continue on down through the ages. It is further assumed that this practice would be continued as long as there are faithful men to make the deposit and to receive the trust. This will insure the continuity of the ministry of the word; and every faithful gospel preacher today has a part in this noble transaction. Let each one therefore ask himself, Am I faithful to my trust? and, What kind of gospel am I committing to others?

Paul's plea that Timothy suffer hardship with him, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus, is a touching statement, written by a father to his son in the gospel whom he was about to leave in a cruel and sinful world.

Those who engage in gospel preaching should not be led to think that such is a life of ease. (Cf. 2 Tim. 4: 1-5.) As life moves forward, there comes to most of us a clearer view of its meaning and of its intense importance. We are led to realize more and more that we are surrounded by many strange and hidden alien forces, and are harassed by numberless unseen foes. These must be met, and that will require hardship and suffering on the part of the faithful child of God. In impressing this lesson upon the mind of Timothy, Paul uses the metaphor of a soldier on duty; and he bade his son in the faith act the part of a good soldier, as he suffered with his father in the gospel. One can see the force of this lesson, if he will try to visualize either the father or the son who refuses to suffer when the other one is compelled to do so.

### Practically Illustrated

(2 Tim. 2: 4-7)

*No soldier on service entangleth himself in the affairs of this life; that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier. And if also a man contend in the games, he is not crowned, except he have contended lawfully. The husbandman that laboreth must be the first to partake of the fruits. Consider what I say; for the Lord shall give thee understanding in all things.*

Those who are familiar with the New Testament records are aware of the fact that both Jesus and the apostles frequently made use of illustrations in their teaching of the truth. A good illustration or figure of speech will often say for us that which we have tried to say and failed. Such a form of words can gather around it all the vague thoughts and feelings which we have been unable to express; with the result that they become plain and simple. Paul uses three such illustrations in this section of the lesson text alone—the soldier, the contestant in games, and the husbandman. While his reference in these is primarily to Timothy as a gospel preacher, the principle itself is also applicable to any child of God. No one who is serving as a soldier, if he expects to please his commander, will become so involved in the other interests of

life, as to make it impossible for him to discharge his obligations as a soldier. A man who is on active duty in such a capacity must be in position to go anywhere, and do anything which his commander requires. (Cf. Matt. 6: 33.)

The key word in the illustration of the soldier is "entangleth," found only in this passage and in 2 Pet. 2: 20. It carries with it the idea of inweaving, or becoming involved. Paul's argument here does not prohibit one's engaging in secular callings as a means of support. He himself made tents; but the idea is that one must not become so involved in the affairs of this life, as to make it impossible for him to be faithful to Christ. Some religious teachers have endeavored to make Paul's teaching here justify, if not indeed require, a life of celibacy for preachers; but there is no foundation in fact for such a conclusion. (Cf. 1 Cor. 9: 5.)

The well-trained athlete knows that he must conform to the rules of the game, if he is to be declared the winner. Later on in this letter to Timothy, Paul will say, "I have finished *the* course." The article "the" is in the original, thus signifying that the course not only indicates strenuous running, but running over a well-defined and carefully-marked-out track. Any Christian, if he is to be faithful to the Lord, must do that which has been ordained for him to do: he must follow the rules. In the words of Grantland Rice,

For when the One Great Scorer comes

To write against your name,  
He writes—not that you won or lost—

But how you played the game.  
The term "lawfully," in the text now before us, should be carefully emphasized. It means about the same as "let us run with patience the race *that is set before us.*" (Heb. 12: lb.)

The word "laboreth," in the third one of Paul's illustrations, appears to be the key word. The apostle is saying, to paraphrase his language, "It is the *working* farmer, rather than the one who does not work, who has the first right of enjoying the fruits of his labors." This, of course, was to encourage Timothy, and through him, all of us, to continue, that is, persevere, in his work as a

minister of the gospel. It is the enduring, patient, self-sacrificing toil which is rewarded in the everyday affairs of this life; and the same principle must be recognized in the spiritual realm. And so, whether as a soldier, an athlete, or a farmer, it is patient endurance which brings the reward. The soldier who avoids foreign entanglements, the athlete who follows the rules of the game, and the farmer who labors, will receive the reward; and anyone who understands these principles will readily see what the principle is which is involved in loyalty to Christ as a gospel preacher or as a Christian.

### The Motive Which Actuated Paul

(2 Tim. 2: 8-13)

*Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel: wherein I suffer hardship unto bonds, as a malefactor; but the word of God is not bound. 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. Faithful is the saying: For if we died with him, we shall also live with him: if we endure, we shall also reign with him: if we shall deny him, he also will deny us: if we faithless, he abideth faithful; for he cannot deny himself.*

Although Paul has consistently urged Timothy to follow his example, he does not want him to lose sight of the One from whom the facts of the gospel are derived, and about whom they are proclaimed. The two facts which Paul urged Timothy to remember about Jesus Christ are his incarnation (of the seed of David) and his resurrection. Paul had always preached these facts, along with the cross or death of Christ; and he calls them the gospel. "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." (1 Cor. 15: 1-4.)

Thus, the three mighty facts of Paul's gospel are the incarnation, the atonement, and the resurrection. They are the core of the gospel; and if we want to be true to apostolic Christianity, we must begin with the three great and stupendous facts.

It was because of Paul's devotion to the gospel truths, and the Lord whose gospel it is, that he was in prison and was treated as a malefactor; but he hastens to assure Timothy that the word of God itself was not bound. In the words of another, "The word of God is not bound and cannot be bound. It has in it the life of him from whom it comes and shares the eternity of him to whom it must return. As Peter said, it liveth and abideth for ever. It has been the word of creation and the word of revelation; it is the word of condemnation and the word of salvation. Some day it shall become the word of consummation, for Christ the Living Word is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." (Cf. Isa. 55: 10, 11.)

It was because of the word of God that Paul endured all things for the elect's sake. Verses 9, 10 are rendered by Phillips in these words: "For preaching this I am having to endure being chained in prison as if I were some sort of criminal. But they cannot chain the word of God, and I can endure all these things for the sake of those whom God is calling, so that they too may receive the salvation of Jesus Christ, and its complement of glory after the world of time." From this and other teaching on the subject, it appears that the elect are not those already saved,

such as the people to whom Peter wrote (1 Pet. 2: 9), but those who would yet hear and obey the gospel. "That they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." Jesus spoke of other sheep which he had, that is, the Gentiles, before they actually became his people (John 10: 16); and "the Lord said unto Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to harm thee: for I have much people in this city." (Acts 18: 9, 10.) That, too, was before the Corinthians became Christians.

In writing to the Thessalonians, Paul said, "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." (2 Thess. 2: 13, 14.) God's will is that all men be saved (1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9), and in that sense he chose them from the beginning; but they are called by, and must obey, the gospel (cf. 2 Thess. 1: 7-9; 1 Pet. 4: 17) in order to obtain the salvation. Those were the people in whom Paul was interested, and for whom he was willing to suffer; and if we get the lesson for ourselves, we will do all we can not to throw a stumblingblock in the way of those who should obey the gospel. The assurances and warnings in verses 11-13 should also be a powerful motive to faithfulness.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place and persons.

### Introduction

Why is strength so necessary for the preacher in accomplishing his work?

Discuss the work which Paul did during his preaching career.

From where and from whom did he receive strength to do so much? Discuss freely.

What lesson should we learn from this?

### The Golden Text

Discuss the meaning and importance of "diligence"?

What should every gospel preacher make certain that he is doing?

What is meant by "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed"?

How does the preacher handle aright the word of truth?

What application did Paul make of this question?

Why was Paul so anxious regarding the welfare of Timothy?

Discuss some of the issues which he set before him regarding faithfulness.

How alone may one be strong in the Lord?

What responsibility does every gospel preacher and every Christian have in this respect?

What "things" had Timothy received from Paul? And under what circumstances?

What responsibility did the "witnesses" have?

What plans were made for the continuance of the gospel ministry?

What great responsibility therefore rests upon list

Why did Paul want Timothy to suffer hardship with them, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus?

Practically Illustrated

Why are illustrations so effective in teaching the truth?

What three illustrations did Paul use in this section of the lesson text?

What are some of the ways in which the Christian soldier can entangle himself in this life?

What must the successful athlete always make certain that he does?

What is the lesson regarding the farmer?

Discuss the special application of the three illustrations of the lesson text.

The Motive Which Actuated Paul

What specific things did Paul urge Tim-

othy to remember regarding Jesus Christ?

What are the fundamental facts of the gospel? Why is this true?

Why was Paul treated as a malefactor?

Why was the word of God not bound?

Why can't the word of God be bound?

Discuss the place and power of God's word in the divine economy.

Why was Paul so willing to suffer all these things?

Who are the "elect"? Give reasons for your answer.

How were they elected? How only may they receive the salvation which is in Christ Jesus?

What lesson should we learn from this for our own selves?

Discuss the assurances and warnings of verses 11-13.

Lesson VIII—November 22, 1964

GREAT WICKEDNESS PREDICTED

Lesson Text

2 Tim. S: 1-13

1 But know this, that in the last days grievous times shall come.

2 For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

3 Without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, no lovers of good,

4 Traitors, headstrong, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God;

5 Holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof: from these also turn away.

6 For of these are they that creep into houses, and take captive silly women laden with sins, led away by divers lusts,

7 Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

8 And even as Jan'-nes and Jam'-

bres withstood Mó'-ses, so do these also withstand the truth; men corrupted in mind, reprobate concerning the faith.

9 But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be evident unto all men, as theirs also came to be.

10 But thou didst follow my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, patience,

11 Persecutions, sufferings; what things befell me at An'-ti-och, at I-co'-ni-um, at Lys'-tra; what persecutions I endured: and out of them all the Lord delivered me.

12 Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Je'-sus shall suffer persecution.

13 But evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Let every one that depart from unrighteousness." (2 Tim. 2: 19.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Tim. 3: 14-17.

nameth the name of the Lord de-

Daily Bible Readings

November 16. M.....Evil Speaking (Col. 3: 1-9)  
November 17. T.....Works of the Flesh (Gal. 5: 19-21)  
November 18. W.....Wrath of God on Disobedient (Eph. 5: 1-6)  
November 19. T.....Destiny of the Wicked (Rev. 22: 10-15)  
November 20. F.....Those Who Do Not Receive Him (Matt. 10: 14, 15)  
November 21. S.....Various Woes (Isa. 3: 11; Amos 6: 1; Nah. 2: 12)  
November 22. S.....God's Attitude Toward Wicked (Psalm 7: 1-11)

TIME.—A.D. 68.

PLACES.—Paul was in Rome; Timothy was in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and Timothy.

## Introduction

People who are not familiar with the Bible may be surprised to learn that some of the darkest pages of history are found in the word of God. The inclusion of these black pictures was not an accident, but rather a deliberate and purposeful plan to show the human race the terrible end which awaits the disobedient and the unfaithful. When people depart from the ways of righteousness, they do not get better, unless they reconsider their ways and resolve to return to God. The lesson text for today is one of the dark pictures of the New Testament; it is filled with forebodings, and makes us think of the first chapter of Romans. Paul was guided by the Holy Spirit when he wrote the words which we are to study today, and he, of course, presented a true picture of that which the future holds for the peoples of the earth. It should be remembered that the apostle warned of a coming apostasy in his first letter to Timothy. It has always been the Lord's plan to present the dark side of the picture, as well as the bright. This is not because he wants evil to come and corrupt his people, but because he knew what sin will do for people and he wants his people to be warned against evil.

The only way to prevent an evil condition, or to weaken its force if it cannot be entirely prevented, is to teach the word of God and urge the people to accept it. Too many people, even in the church, fail to see this truth, or are indifferent toward it; and therefore do nothing about it until the damage has already been done, and then it is usually too late, at least for many people. The conflict between right and wrong has been in progress since the seduction of Eve and the sin of Adam in the garden of Eden; and the only possible way to improve conditions is to listen to the Lord, instead of the evil one. One has only to look about him in order to see that a great many churches have been sadly crippled, if not entirely destroyed, simply because the people were not taught the

word of God and urged to accept it. When people are familiar with that which the Bible teaches, and have learned to respect the authority of the Lord, it is not so easy for them to be led astray. But when the great work which the Lord has given to his people to accomplish is neglected, it is not difficult for thoughtful people to see that grievous times are inevitable.

When Paul wrote the letter to the Romans, he set forth something of the history and philosophy of sin. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness; because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them. For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse: because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

"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; being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers without natural affection, unmerciful: who, knowing the ordinance of God, that they that practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also consent with them that practice them." (Rom. 1: 18-23, 28-32.)

## The Golden Text

*"Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness."* These words are

found in the midst of a statement which, if carefully followed, will enable one to be strong in the Lord. "Of



these things put them in remembrance, charging them in the sight of the Lord, that they strive not about words, to no profit, to the subverting of them that hear. Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth. But shun profane babblings: 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. Howbeit the firm foundation of God standeth, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his: and, Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness" (2 Tim. 2: 14-19.)

No one will ever be able to stand unless he is on a solid foundation. (Cf. Matt. 7: 24-27.) Throughout the letter which we are now studying, the mind of Paul oscillates between deserters of the cause of Christ, and those who are faithful to him under all circumstances. In the verses immediately preceding the golden text, the apostle gives an example of how a mishandling of the truth resulted in the overthrowing of the faith of some; and then, with a strong adversative, he makes his affirmation

## The Text Explained

### A Warning of What to Expect

(2 Tim. 3: 1-5)

*But know this, that in the last days grievous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy without natural affection implacable, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, no lovers of good, traitors, headstrong, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof: from these also turn away.*

This section of the lesson text is another illustration of what happens to people who refuse to have God in knowledge; and any one who will consult an English dictionary will have little or no trouble in getting the ideas which the terms Paul uses mean. The "last days" have reference to the days during the Chris-

regarding the foundation of God. It is called the *firm*, that is, strong and immovable, *foundation of God*. It is something which belongs to God, and is used to underlie or support a proposition which vitally concerns every faithful follower of Christ; and which, if understood and accepted, will keep one from falling away from him.

The foundation about which Paul is writing is the faithfulness of God; and there is a "seal" or inscription engraved upon it in two parts, namely, (1) The Lord knoweth them that are his; and (2) Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness. The first part of the twofold inscription (cf. Nah. 1: 7; Num. 16: 5) implies that the church exists in the Divine knowledge, and not merely in the intellect of men. The second part of the inscription shows what the Lord expects of his people. Thayer defines "unrighteousness" as "a deed violating law and justice." It includes every breach of duty, and everything which comes short of the requirements of justice. The first part of the inscription pledges the security of the believer, while the second guarantees his purity; and it should be kept in mind that purity is indispensable to security.

tian dispensation. After the gospel was presented in its clearest terms by inspired writers and teachers, the shadows begin to deepen as the future unfolds itself and history is recorded. The last recorded words of Paul, Peter, John, and Jude form an impressive prelude to the Book of Revelation. This last part of the New Testament is an inspired account of that which would befall the church between the time when John wrote and the coming of Christ at the end of the world. The fortunes of the church, its struggles and ultimate victory, are graphically set forth in prophecy; but it should be observed that much of that which was *prophecy* when John wrote is *history* now. Prophecy which has to do with the future may be described as history written in advance, that is, recorded before it happened.

We have already seen in this series

of studies that Paul predicted an apostasy in 1 Tim. 4: 1-3. Peter, John, and Jude also wrote of great wickedness which the church would encounter in the days which lay ahead. "Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." (2 Pet. 3: 3, 4; cf. Jude 17, 18; 1 John 2: 18, 19.) We may indeed not know to what specific period Paul had in mind when he said that grievous times would come; but inasmuch as the original word for "times" usually designated a definite season, it is reasonable to suppose that he had something specific in mind. It could mean, of course, that such seasons would occur more than once, since the "last days" cover the entire Christian dispensation.

If we will only stop and think, it will not be difficult for us to see that selfishness is the basis for practically every sin which is committed by men. Jesus made the denial of self the first condition of discipleship. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." (Matt. 16: 24.) The original words for "let him deny himself" mean, according to Arndt-Gingrich, to act in a wholly selfless manner, or give up his personality. When people think more of their own welfare than that of others and the glory of God, it is easy for them to be lovers of money, so that they may have what they want, to disregard their parents, and love pleasure rather than God—these and all the kindred sins which go with such an attitude. Such people may profess to know God, but by their works they deny him. (See Tit. 1: 16.) People of this type are only professing Christians; there is nothing genuine about them. They hold a form of godliness, but deny its power. Their view of practical Christianity is purely theoretical and academic; and such an attitude is, for all practical purposes, a disbelief in its regenerating force. It is a repudiation of that for which Christ stands and authorizes for his people. (Cf. Tit. 2: 12; 1 Tim. 5: 8; Rev. 2: 13.) The people about whom

Paul was writing were carrying their denial into actual practice; and Timothy was exhorted to turn away from them, that is, shun or avoid them. This implies that Paul's son in the gospel would live to see the grievous times, about which he wrote him. The term "also" probably refers back to 2 Tim. 2: 22, 23.

### False Teachers—Their Methods and Opposition to the Truth

(2 Tim. 3: 6-9)

*For of these are they that creep into houses, and take captive silly women laden with sins, led away by divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. And even as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also withstand the truth; men corrupted in mind, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be evident unto all men, as theirs also came to be.*

The false teachers from whom Paul told Timothy to turn away did not go about their work openly, but wormed their way into houses (see Arndt-Gingrich, et al) by stealth. Such insidious methods are also referred to in other parts of the New Testament. "For there are certain men crept in privily, even they who were of old written of beforehand unto this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." (Jude 4; cf. 2 Pet. 2: 1; Gal. 2: 4.) This, unfortunately, is still the method which is employed by many false teachers today. Any cause which requires such procedure is indeed weak, and any teacher who resorts to such methods either does not understand the spirit of Christ or does not respect it.

The original term for "silly women" occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and literally means *little women*, but with a derogatory connotation, such as idle or silly women, according to Arndt-Gingrich, Thayer, and other Greek scholars. Vincent says that *silly* is expressed by the contemptuous diminutive. Ramsay thinks that the reference is to "society ladies," and Robertson notes that "it is amazing how gullible some women are with religious

charlatans who pose as exponents of 'new thought'." In recording the facts regarding Paul's experience in Athens, Luke says, parenthetically, that "all the Athenians and the strangers sojourning there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing." (Acts 17: 21.) This is especially true of people in every age who have both money and leisure at their disposal. The Interpreter's Bible observes that religious faddists find easy prey among well-to-do women who are dissatisfied with an idle and empty life. This same commentator goes on to say that religion becomes a fad when we try to use it as a means of getting what we want, even when it is something good like peace of mind, happiness, or contentment. True religion is the giving of ourselves to God to be used for his purpose, even though such self-giving is both costly and painful to us. (Cf. Matt. 16: 24.)

Women of the character referred to in the text now under consideration are easily flattered, and are charmed by the graceful manners of religious instructors who are worldly-wise, and who hold a form of godliness, but deny its power. Such women are willing to listen to anything which has the appearance of religion, or of being beneficial to society in general. These are the kind of people teachers of error can rely upon. They have leisure, wealth, and influence; and once they have been won over to the cause, they are willing to spend time, effort, and money in getting this teaching to others. Furthermore, being overwhelmed by their own sins, they are easily tempted to seek the easiest method of relief. The many kinds of "lusts" indicate, not only animal, but also the desire for change in doctrine and manner: hence, the running after fashionable teachers and their doctrines. And so, instead of concentrating their minds on the truth as it is revealed in the New Testament, these "silly women" are always endeavoring to learn some novel doctrine which suits their fancy.

People of this type can easily weaken their power of comprehension to the point where it becomes practically impossible for them to grasp the truth. If anyone really

desires the truth, he must learn that in its conquest character comes before conduct. (Cf. John 7: 17.) No person can really recognize or comprehend the truth, unless he has a sympathy for it. Vincent notes that "sympathy with the will of God is a condition of understanding it"; while Robertson points out that "there must be moral harmony between man's purpose and God's will. 'If there be no sympathy there can be no understanding' (Westcott)." The *willingness*, in the very nature of the case, must precede the *doing*. When people reject the divine standard, they may continue to learn, but they will never know the truth. Intellectual curiosity in the absence of a determination to put one's learning into practical use, will benefit no one.

Jannes and Jambres were evidently two of the magicians, probably the principal ones among "the wise men and the sorcerers" of Egypt, who opposed the efforts of Moses to get Pharaoh to allow the people of Israel to go into the wilderness. (See Ex. 7.) Their purpose was to discredit Moses and Aaron in the presence of the king, by making it appear that they did not have any more power than did the magicians; but all who are familiar with the facts of that narrative are aware of the fate which came to them, to Pharaoh, and the people of Egypt, as a result of their listening to them. The heretics of Paul's day were following the example of the magicians of Egypt in their opposition to the truth. It is unfortunate that that practice did not die with those false teachers; but it did not. Every gospel preacher today has seen the method at work. When the Lord's plan for the salvation of alien sinners is presented, the modern-day magicians endeavor to show the people who need that salvation that it is not necessary for them to comply with the Lord's requirement of baptism. "Why, we have preachers who are better educated than those who are preaching that; and they say that it is not necessary for one to be baptized in order to be saved!" (Cf. Mark 16: 15, 16; Gal. 1: 6-9.) That is an unfortunate state of mind, but any honest person who really wants to know the truth, so that he can obey it, can easily see the error of

such teaching by reading the revealed will of the Lord.

### Timothy's Knowledge of the Truth Should Ensure His Safety

(2 Tim. 3: 10-13)

*But thou didst follow my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, patience, persecutions, sufferings; what things befell me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: and out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.*

Timothy, in contrast with the heretical teachers of the previous section of the lesson text, was thoroughly qualified to teach the truth, and to remain a loyal exponent of the Christian religion. He had followed Paul so closely as to make the apostle's entire teaching and experience his own. The original word for "follow" carries with it the idea of following with the mind to the point of making the teaching and experience of the leader one's own; to follow faithfully, follow as a rule of life. (Cf. 1 Tim. 4: 6.) The original term occurs in only two other instances in the New Testament, namely, Mark 16: 17; Luke 1: 3. The meaning and use of this word illustrates the sympathetic attitude which one must maintain, if he is to understand the will of the Lord. (Cf. John 7: 17.) Timothy, apparently, was a native of Lystra, and Paul selected the experiences which befell him during the

time he was in that general area—Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra—, during the first great missionary journey; and he calls Timothy's attention to the fact that God delivered him from all those trials and tribulations.

Timothy, and all other faithful Christians as for that matter, should not be misled by the paradox involving the Lord's people and heretical teachers. All who are determined to live for God in this wicked world will suffer persecution, but false teachers will go on from bad to worse. This is true because God and the evil one are diametrically opposed to each other; and as long as the world and false teachers are dominated by the devil, God's people will be opposed by them, while false teachers will be allowed to continue their work. This does not mean, of course, that all worldly people, or even all wicked people, will oppose and persecute faithful Christians (cf. 2 Cor. 4: 2; 1 Pet. 2: 11, 12); but it does mean that the closer one walks with the Lord, and the more he does in his service, the greater will be the opposition which he will receive from some quarters. Verse 12 of the lesson text is a statement of fact which an inspired apostle knew to be true. But wicked men and impostors shall go on, both deceiving and being deceived; which implies that they are both intentionally and unintentionally evil. The original word for "impostors" is found nowhere else in the New Testament, and it means a juggler, swindler, cheat; and, in the words of Robertson, "modern impostors know all the tricks of the trade."

### Questions for Discussion

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

#### Introduction

Why are there so many dark chapters in the Bible?  
What is the general trend of those who depart from the Lord's will and way?  
Under what circumstances did Paul write the words of our lesson for today?  
What is the only way to prevent evil conditions, or to weaken their force if they cannot be prevented?  
Why do the Lord's people manifest such little concern regarding these matters?  
Tell something of the history and philosophy of sin.

#### The Golden Text

Discuss the context of the statement which serves as the golden text.

What is always essential to a firm stand?  
(Give reasons for your answer.)  
What is the firm foundation of God?  
What two inscriptions are engraved upon it?

#### A Warning of What to Expect

What does this section of the lesson text illustrate?  
What is meant by the "last days"?  
How do the final words of Paul and other New Testament writers fit in with the Book of Revelation?  
What are some of the characteristics of the apostasy referred to by Paul and others?  
What is indicated by the term "times"?  
What is the relationship of selfishness to sin in general?  
What does Jesus teach regarding this subject?  
Why are people who manifest the traits

mentioned by Paul only professing Christians?

#### False Teachers—Their Methods and Opposition to the Truth

Why do false teachers go about their work by stealth?

What is meant by creeping into houses?

What can you say of the causes which such teachers espouse?

Who are the "silly women" of the lesson text?

Why are they such an easy prey for heretical teachers?

Why are so many people interested in the "new"?

What makes "silly women" ardent supporters of their newly found cause?

Why is sympathy for the truth essential to its comprehension?

Who were Jannes and Jambres and whom do they illustrate?

#### Timothy's Knowledge of the Truth Should Ensure His Safety

Why was Timothy so well qualified to withstand error and teach the truth?

What trait of character did he manifest in his relation to Paul?

What is implied in the term "follow"?

Why did Paul mention the three cities of the text?

Why do God's people suffer persecution and what is the meaning of deceiving and being deceived?

## Lesson IX—November 29, 1964

### PAUL'S FINAL WORDS

#### Lesson Text

2 Tim. 4: 9-18

9 Give diligence to come shortly unto me:

10 For De'-mas forsook me, having loved this present world, and went to Thes-sa-lo-ni-ca; Cres'-cens to Ga-la'-ti-a, Ti'-tus to Dal-ma'-ti-a.

11 Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is useful to me for ministering.

12 But Tych'-i-cus I sent to Eph'-e-sus.

13 The cloak that I left at Tro'-as with Car'-pus, bring when thou comest, and the books, especially the parchments.

14 Al-ex-an'-der the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord will re-

der to him according to his works:

15 Of whom do thou also beware; for he greatly withstood our words.

16 At my first defence no one took my part, but all forsook me: may it not be laid to their account.

17 But the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me; that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and that all the Gen'-tiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.

18 The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be the glory for ever and ever. A-men'.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith"* (2 Tim. 4: 7.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Tim. 4: 1-8.

#### Daily Bible Readings

November 23. M. The Lord's Final Words (Matt. 28: 18-20; Mark 16: 15, 16)  
 November 24. T. .... Peace in the Face of Trial (Isa. 26: 1-3)  
 November 25. W. .... Faith in the Future (2 Tim. 2: 12-14)  
 November 26. T. .... Confidence in Immortality (2 Cor. 5: 1-10)  
 November 27. F. .... Deliverance for Those Who Trust Him (Dan. 3: 1-28)  
 November 28. S. .... A Shield to All Who Trust Him (2 Sam. 22: 1-22)  
 November 29. S. .... God a Faithful Creator (1 Pet. 4: 1-19)

TIME.—A.D. 68.

PLACES.—Paul was in Rome; Timothy was in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and Timothy.

#### Introduction

We are deeply affected in both heart and mind, when we come to read the last letter of any person in whom we have a special interest;

for we are keenly aware of the fact that we shall never have a further such message from him. Paul wrote more of the epistles of the New Tes-

tament than all of the other writers combined. In fact, when we add all the separate books of the New Testament together, it will be seen that the apostle to the Gentiles wrote more than half of them. It is true that some Bible students deny that Paul wrote Hebrews and the three so-called pastoral epistles; but it appears that there is enough evidence, when fairly considered, to warrant the conclusion that he did write all four of them. We are, of course, deeply interested in all of Paul's letters, as indeed we are in all the other books of the entire Bible; but we are particularly concerned at this time with our interest in his last letter.

Paul's final charge to Timothy, and through him to us (cf. 2 Tim. 2: 2), is as pertinent now as it was the day he wrote it. His immortal words in that charge are: "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.) No gospel preacher today can read the words just quoted, and take them seriously, without resolving to do his best, with God's help, to be faithful to the trust which has been committed to him. And that means that he will endeavor to preach the gospel, fully and completely, to saint and to sinner, to the very best of his ability and opportunity.

It was pointed out in an earlier lesson in this series that Paul's probable purpose in writing this letter to Timothy was that in case his son in the gospel failed to reach the prison before the apostle was executed, the younger man would have a letter containing his final advice to a young preacher who was being left in a wicked world to face the hardships involved in opposing the heresies which were threatening to destroy the very essence of Christianity. The expression "Give diligence to come before winter" (2 Tim. 4: 21a) implies that Paul expected to be in prison the following winter. It is generally thought that Paul was arrested, probably about the middle of the previous winter, as we shall also note in our study of his letter to Titus; and it is further supposed that his preliminary trial was conducted during the ensuing spring, after which he was returned to his prison cell. From his past experience (his two years' wait in Rome some five years before, Acts 28: 30, 31), Paul probably felt that there would be another long delay before his trial, which would extend into or perhaps through the coming winter. But instead, as Conybeare and Howson suppose, the apostle's condemnation and execution "actually took place about midsummer."

### The Golden Text

*"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith."* The first two parts of this passage are evidently expressed in the language of the Olympian games, which Paul frequently used to illustrate his work. The definite "the," which is in the original, should not be overlooked; it is found three times in verse 7. The idea involved in the passage is clearly emphasized by Phillips and The Twentieth Century New Testament, respectively, in

these words: "The glorious fight that God gave me I have fought, the course that I was set I have finished, and I have kept the faith." "I have run the great Race; I have finished the Course; I have kept the Faith." The first two propositions are figurative, while the last is literal. There was nothing uncertain about Paul's life as a Christian; it was planned and executed according to well defined principles and definite instruc-

In using the same metaphors, Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "I therefore so run, as not uncertainly; so fight I, as not beating the air: but I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected." (1 Cor. 9: 26, 27.) This is another way of saying that Paul always had a goal before him. Moffatt translates the passage in these words: "Well, I run without swerving; I do not plant my blows upon empty air—no, I maul and master my body, lest, after preaching to other people, I am disqualified myself"; while Phillips has it, "I run the race then with determination. I am no shadowboxer; I really fight! I am my body's sternest master, for fear that when I have preached to others I should myself be disqualified." (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 9, 10; Phil. 3: 12-14.)

The fight in which the Christian must engage is not a sham fight about which he can afford to be careless, and neither is it a practice during which he can hit out at an imaginary opponent; the child of God is up against real opposition, and to waste his energies in a make-believe

contest will be fatal. Christianity is an intense and earnest matter, and we shall emerge from its challenge either as victors or victims; either with shame or with glory. Pythagoras, the Greek philosopher and mathematician, was once asked by a Greek tyrant what he was doing at the Olympian games, and the philosopher replied, so the story goes, in these words: "Some come to try out for the prizes, some come to sell their merchandise, some come to enjoy themselves and meet their friends. I am one of those who come just to stand on the sidelines and to look on." Bacon, in telling this story many years later, added this significant remark: "But man must know that in the theatre of men's lives and God's world, it is reserved only for God and the angels to look on." In saying, "I have kept the faith," Paul drops the figure and refers to his faithfulness as a steward. "The faith," that is, the truth of the gospel, had been committed to Paul; and he had been faithful to the trust. (Cf. 1 Thess. 2: 4; 1 Tim. 1: 12.) Paul had not, as others had done, made shipwreck of the faith. (1 Tim. 1: 19.)

## The Text Explained

### The Lonely Apostle Longs to See Timothy

(2 Tim. 4: 9-13)

*Give diligence to come shortly unto me: for Demas forsook me, having loved this present world, and went to Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is useful to me for ministering. But Tychicus I sent to Ephesus. The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, bring when thou comest, and the books, especially the parchments.*

There are people today who claim to be Christians, but who imagine that they do not need the companionship of others. They appear to think that they can get along alone as well, if not better, than they could with the fellowship of the Lord's people. But that was not true of Paul. He longed for the companionship of his friends, and was grieved when any of his fellow workers no longer had fellowship with him. The defection of Demas has cast a suspicion on

both Crescens and Titus, who are mentioned along with the deserter. There is nothing further known of Crescens, but there is nothing in the text which so much as implies that he, too, forsook Paul. This is especially true when we come to consider the facts which are known regarding Titus. In view of his life of faithful sacrifice in carrying out difficult assignments which Titus so often demonstrated, along with the letter which Paul wrote him only a few months earlier, it is refreshing to think, along with Conybeare and Howson, et al, that Paul himself, in his own self-forgetfulness for the cause of Christ, had sent Titus to Dalmatia; and what was probably true of him, may also have been true of Crescens.

Luke, the beloved physician, was apparently the only fellow Christian who was with Paul at the time he wrote the letter from which the lesson text is taken. On two other occasions his name is linked with that of Demas. (Phile. 24; Col. 4: 14.) The two letters just referred to were

written by Paul during his first Roman imprisonment, some five years earlier; and it is refreshing to know that in all the years since Luke first became a companion of Paul, there is not a mark against him. Many Bible students are of the opinion that Luke and Titus were brothers in the flesh. More will be said about this when we come to study the letter which Paul wrote to Titus.

Those who are familiar with Paul and Barnabas and their first missionary journey are aware of the fact that Paul and Mark became alienated; and that the separation was so complete as to result in the separation of Paul and Barnabas, the latter being a relative of Mark. (See Acts 13: 5, 13; 15: 36-40; Col. 4: 10.) But it is clear from the last passage cited, and from the text now under consideration, that Paul and Mark were later reconciled. This is enough to show that it is possible for brethren to have differences, even serious differences, and later have them resolved. Indeed, the fact that brethren do not agree is not necessarily the important question; it is, rather, can they bring themselves into agreement? We do not know just how the reconciliation between Paul and Mark was effected, but it is reasonable to suppose that the latter came to himself when he saw and heard that which Paul said and did about the matter. Paul's aim was to save both the work and the worker; and from the record of what happened, it appears that he did just that!

Tychicus was a trusted fellow worker (see Eph. 6: 21, 22; Col. 4: 7, 8). It is thought by some Bible students that Paul sent Tychicus to Ephesus to relieve Timothy, so that the latter might go to Rome to see Paul; and that Mark was to fill the vacancy which was created by the departure of Tychicus from the apostle. There are many facts which Paul refers to in his last letter to Timothy, but we are not always able to place them in their proper perspective. This is true of the reference to the things in the house of Carpus. We learn from Tit. 3: 12 that Paul had planned to spend the previous winter in Nicopolis, apparently the Nicopolis in Epirus on the western seacoast of ancient Greece. It is not definitely known whether or

not he ever reached that city, but he probably did. Some students of the life of Paul think that he may have been arrested in Troas in the house of Carpus where, in the hurry of departure, he left his cloak, books, and parchments. Many students, however, are of the opinion that Paul did reach Nicopolis; and probably was arrested there during midwinter.

### Dealing with the Opposition

(2 Tim. 4: 14, 15)

*Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord will render to him according to his works: of whom do thou also beware; for he greatly withstood our words.*

There is no definite information regarding the identity of this Alexander, who is called "the coppersmith"; and neither can we be certain as to where he lived and operated against Paul. It is possible that he is the same as the Alexander mentioned in 1 Tim. 1: 20; and may also have been identical with the Alexander of Ephesus. (See Acts 19: 33f.) But whoever he was, and wherever he lived, his opposition to the truth was enough to cause Paul to warn Timothy against him.

The principal lesson which we should get regarding Paul, Timothy, and Alexander the coppersmith, is the manner in which Paul dealt with the opposition. It is true that Paul suffered personally from that which Alexander said and did, but the greatest injury was doubtless in connection with his opposition to the truth. It is thought by some Bible students that Alexander the coppersmith was either one of Paul's accusers, or at least a witness against him at his preliminary trial in Rome, the one referred to in the next section of the lesson text. But regardless of what Alexander said or did, or when and where it happened, it is a noticeable fact that Paul did not seek personal revenge. He left the punishment in the hands of the Lord, which was in keeping with his previous teaching on that subject. (See Rom. 12: 17-21.) Individual Christians and the church as a whole will always have their opponents, and the very best that anyone can do is to follow Paul's example in dealing with them.



## Alone, Yet Not Alone

(2 Tim. 4: 16-18)

*At my first defence no one took my part, but all forsook me: may it not be laid to their account. But the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me; that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

Paul's experience here was similar to that of Jesus, referred to in John 16: 32. This "first defence" cannot refer to Paul's trial during his first Roman imprisonment, the one mentioned in Acts 28: 30, 31; for it is clear from his letter to the Philippians, written apparently near the close of his incarceration, that he was not forsaken, in spite of the fact that he seemingly did not enjoy the comparative freedom when he wrote Philippians, that was his during the beginning of his imprisonment. Those who deny that Paul was twice imprisoned in Rome have difficulty in explaining what this "first defence" was; but those who contend that he was twice imprisoned in the Imperial City regard his first defence as a preliminary investigation to which the apostle had to submit, during his second imprisonment, after which he was returned to his prison cell. It appears that no Christian ventured to stand by Paul during this preliminary trial, so perilous was it to show any sympathy for the aged apostle. This was apparently the first that Timothy had heard of this experience. (Cf. Acts 7: 60.) The following statement by Conybeare and Howson will serve to explain, to some degree at least, why some of Paul's friends and fellow Christians failed to stand by him when he was brought to trial.

"When the alarm and indignation of the people was excited by the tremendous ruin of a conflagration, which burnt down almost half the city, it answered the purpose of Nero (who was accused of causing the fire) to avert the rage of the populace from himself to the already hated votaries of a new religion. Tacitus describes the success of this

expedient, and relates the sufferings of the Christian martyrs, who were put to death with circumstances of the most aggravated cruelty. Some were crucified; some disguised in the skins of beasts, and hunted to death with dogs; some were wrapped in robes impregnated with inflammable materials, and set on fire at night, that they might serve to illuminate the gardens of Nero, where this diabolical monster exhibited the agonies of his victims to the public, and gloated over them himself, mixing among the spectators in the costume of a charioteer. Brutalized as the Romans were, by the perpetual spectacle of human combats in the amphitheatre, and hardened by popular prejudice against the 'atheistical' sect, yet the tortures of the victims excited even their compassion. 'A very great multitude,' as Tacitus informs us, perished in this manner; and it appears from his statement that the mere fact of professing Christianity was accounted sufficient to justify their execution; the whole body of Christians being considered as involved in the crime of firing the city. This, however, was in the first excitement which followed the fire, and even then, probably but few among those who perished were Roman citizens. Since that time some years had passed, and now a decent respect would be paid to the forms of law, in dealing with one who, like St. Paul, possessed the privilege of citizenship. Yet we can quite understand that a leader of so abhorred a sect would be subjected to a severe imprisonment."

The terror of Paul's final arrest and imprisonment must have caused many of his friends to desert him; as was true in the case of Jesus and his disciples. (Cf. Mark 14: 50.) We know that when Paul wrote this last letter to Timothy he was treated as a malefactor. (2 Tim. 2: 9.) It is also possible that one article of the accusation against the apostle was the more serious charge of having influenced the Roman Christians in their supposed act of setting the city on fire, before his last departure from the Roman capital, following his release from his first Roman imprisonment. The "fearful" in Rev. 21: 8, according to Thayer, is a term used to describe "Christians who through cowardice give way under

persecutions and apostatize." There are many professed Christians today who turn their backs on the Lord and his people for reasons which are much less dangerous than those which Paul's friends faced!

But when men fail, the Lord is near. Paul had long proclaimed this doctrine, and it proved to be true in his case. (Cf. Phil. 4: 13.) The Gentiles were probably those who were at his preliminary hearing, and those who would learn of the gospel from those who were there in person. This is a good commentary on Paul's statement 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." (Cf. Phil. 1: 12-14.) The term "lion" refers to some great danger, probably to death in the arena. Paul's past experience had taught him that true followers of Christ cannot expect to be spared physical sufferings (cf. 2 Tim. 3: 12); but he had learned to depend upon the Lord; and it was for that reason that he could, amid desertion, imprisonment, and the prospect of death itself, break forth into a paean of praise: "to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen." (Cf. Acts 16: 25.) The term "Amen" is used in solemn ratification or confirmation—"So be it."

Verse 18 of the text now before us expresses Paul's supreme confidence

in the Lord. Following his release from his first Roman imprisonment, he had written, "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 them." (Heb. 11: 6.) To believe that God is, is to be convinced that he does exist; and to believe that he rewards them that seek after him, is to have confidence in him. And it was for these reasons that Paul could say to Timothy, "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.) Bengel calls the confidence which Paul expresses in verse 18 hope drawing its conclusions for the future from the past. The Lord had never failed Paul, and he was certain that he never would; and what was true of Paul should be true of every one of us today. Among the final words of encouragement which Christ gave to his disciples (and what was said to them applies to his people as long as time continues) are these: "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. 28: 20.) The marginal reading for "always" is *all the days* which, of course, means good days and bad days.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Discuss the effects the final letter of one in whom we are interested has on us.  
How much of the New Testament did Paul write?  
What was Paul's final charge to his son in the faith, Timothy?  
What effect does a sincere reading of this charge by gospel preachers today have?  
What was Paul's apparent purpose in writing his last letter to Timothy?  
What is implied in the expression "Give diligence to come before winter"?

### The Golden Text

Analyze the passage which serves as the golden text for today's lesson.  
What is the significance of the threefold use of the definite article "the"?  
Why did Paul probably use the metaphors involving a fight and a race?  
Discuss the "good fight" and the "course" which Christians are to run.  
Is it possible for any Christian to refrain from them and still be pleasing to God?

Give reasons for your answer.  
What did Paul mean by saying, "I have kept the faith"?

### The Lonely Apostle Longs to See Timothy

Why did Paul long for the companionship of his brethren?  
What do you think of a professed Christian who imagines that he can get along without such fellowship?  
Do you think that Crescens and Titus deserted Paul, as Demas did? Give reasons for your answer.  
What do we know of Luke in his relation to Paul?  
What is known of Mark previous to the time of this lesson?  
What lesson should we learn from the relationship between Paul and Mark?  
Who was Tychicus and why was he probably sent to Ephesus at the time of this lesson?  
What "ministering" did Paul probably have in mind for Mark?

Dealing with the Opposition  
Who was this Alexander? Give reasons for your answer.  
What had been his attitude toward Paul?  
What advice did Paul give Timothy regarding him?

What lesson should we learn from this?  
What great example did Paul leave us in  
this respect?

## Alone, Yet Not Alone

Compare the experiences of Paul and Jesus in this respect.

What reasons do we have for thinking that this was during Paul's second Roman imprisonment?

Why did the Christian people desert Paul at this critical hour?

What charge can you think of which may have been made against Paul?

What does the New Testament teach regarding the "fearful"?

What great work did the Lord preserve Paul to do?

Why could Paul be so happy under such circumstances?

How could the apostle have such un-  
bounded confidence in the Lord?

What lesson should we all learn from this?

What great promise did Jesus make to his people?

## Lesson X—December 6, 1964

## PAUL'S LETTER TO TITUS

## Lesson Text

**Tit. 1: 1-5, 10-16**

1 Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Je'sus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness,

2 In hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before times eternal;

3 But in his own seasons manifested his word in the message, wherewith I was intrusted according to the commandment of God our Saviour;

4 To Ti-tus, my true child after a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Je'-sus our Saviour.

5 For this cause left I thee in Crete,  
that thou shouldest set in order the  
things that were wanting, and ap-  
point elders in every city, as I gave  
thee charge;

• • • • •

10 For there are many unruly men,

vain talkers and deceivers, specially  
they of the circumcision,

11 Whose mouths must be stopped;  
men who overthrow whole houses,  
teaching things which they ought not,  
for filthy lucre's sake.

12 One of themselves, a prophet of  
their own, said,

Cre'-tans are always liars, evil  
beasts, idle gluttons.

13 This testimony is true. For which cause reprove them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith,

14 Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men who turn away from the truth.

15 To the pure all things are pure: but to them that are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but both their mind and their conscience are defiled.

16 They profess that they know God; but by their works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

Golden TEXT.—*"In all things showing thyself an ensample of good works."* (Tit. 2: 7.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Tim. 1: 3-11.

## Daily Bible Readings

November 30.	M.	.....	Titus, Associate of Paul (Gal. 2: 1-6)
December 1.	T.	.....	Paul's Regard for Titus (2 Cor. 2: 12, 13)
December 2.	W.	.....	Faithful Associates (Col. 4: 7-10)
December 3.	T.	.....	Unfaithful Associates (2 Tim. 4: 9-18)
December 4.	F.	.....	Salutations (2 Tim. 4: 19-22)
December 5.	S.	.....	Numerous Associates of Paul (Rom. 16: 3-23)
December 6.	S.	.....	Wonderful Ascription of Praise (Rom. 16: 25-27)

TIME.—Probably A.D. 67.

PLACES.—Paul was probably in Ephesus; Titus was in Crete.

PERSONS.—Paul and Titus.

## Introduction

Ramsay calls Titus the most enigmatic figure in early Christian history. The name of this able and devoted companion of Paul is nowhere found in the Book of Acts. The only New Testament references to him are in Second Corinthians, Galatians, Second Timothy, and the epistle which bears his name. The only thing that is known about his origin is that he was a Gentile. (Gal. 2: 3.) His birthplace is not known, but it may have been in Antioch of Syria, since he seems to have been living there when he accompanied Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem for the conference of Acts 15. (Gal. 2: 1.) In commenting on the omission of Titus' name from the Book of Acts, Ramsay says, "The only strange fact in reference to Titus, is that he nowhere appears in *Acts*; and that is equally hard to explain on every theory. Clearly he played a considerable part in the early history of the church (as Luke himself did); and, on our hypothesis of Luke's historical insight and power of selecting and grouping details, the complete omission of Titus' name must be intentional, just as the silence about Luke is intentional." The nearest approach to the mention of Luke in Acts is to be found in the famous "we" passages of that book. (See Acts 16: 10-17; 20: 6-15; 27: 1-8, and on through the remaining part of the book.)

A suggestion as to the possible explanation of the omission of the name of Titus from the Book of Acts is made by Ramsay, as follows: "Perhaps Titus was a relative of Luke; and Eusebius found this statement ... in an old tradition, attached to 2 Cor. VIII 18, XII 18, where Titus and Luke (the latter not named by Paul, but identified by an early tradition) are associated as envoys to Corinth. Luke, as we may suppose, thought it right to omit his relative's name, as he did his own name, from his history. There is not sufficient evidence to justify an opinion; but this conjecture brings together an enigmatic expression in Eusebius and a serious difficulty in *Acts*, and finds in each a satisfactory solution of the other."

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, and always with marked affection and distinction. No one can read the passages which contain his name without being impressed with the idea that Titus was evidently one of the most congenial and useful of all of Paul's assistants. Something of the ability and strength of character by which Titus was distinguished may be learned by considering some of the difficult tasks which were assigned to him. (1) *u4s a Peacemaker in Corinth*. The church in Corinth has been described as "the most unmanageable of churches;" and when Titus was sent there with Paul's sorrowful letter," he found the church torn asunder by strife and alienated from their founder and spiritual father. Something of Paul's estimate of the success which Titus achieved in this assignment may be learned by reading 2 Cor. 7: 5-16.

(2) *The Collection for the Jerusalem Saints*. When Paul needed some one to stir up the Corinthian church regarding a contribution which they had promised to make for their Jewish brethren in Judaea, he again turned to Titus; and Titus again gladly responded to the call. (2 Cor. 8: 16, 17.) And there is every reason for thinking that when Titus had finished his task, Paul could say, "I was not put to shame." (3) *His Ministry in Crete*. Sometime after Paul was released from his first Roman Imprisonment, it appears that he and Titus did some missionary work on the island of Crete. It is not known whether or not this was the first gospel preaching which was done there. There were representatives from Crete present on the memorable Pentecost of Acts 2 (verse 11), and it is possible that some of them were converted during the early days of the church, and later returned to their native land and established the work there. But be that as it may, it is evident from Paul's letter to Titus that the churches on the island of Crete were lacking in proper leadership, and other characteristics which are essential for a vigorous work, such as the Lord is pleased with. It was up to Titus to "set in order the things that were wanting, and appoint elders in every city," as Paul had charged him.

## The Golden Text

*"In all things showing thyself an ensample of good works."* This passage is rendered by Weymouth in these words: "And, above all, exhibit in your own life a pattern of right conduct." This is another way of saying that sound teaching must always be supported by godly conduct, if the teaching is to have the desired effect. Any teacher of God's word, and especially a gospel preacher, whose life is at variance with his teaching cannot be pleasing to God. When Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy, he said, "Take heed to thyself, and to thy teaching. Continue in these things; for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee." (1 Tim. 4: 16; cf. John 17: 19.) No Christian, and certainly no preacher, can confine the results of his life and work to himself; and he should be sobered by the realization of the fact that there are more people than he can ever know who are being influenced for weal or for woe by what he is and by what he does. One of the requirements which are imposed upon the elders of the church is the one which says that they must have good testimony from them that are without, which means that their lives must not detract from their teaching.

Madam Swetchine avers that "there is a transcendent power in example. We reform others uncon-

sciously when we walk uprightly." Albert Einstein says, "I am absolutely convinced that no wealth in the world can help humanity forward, even in the hands of the most devoted worker in this cause. The example of great and pure individuals is the only thing that can lead us to noble thoughts and deeds. Money only appeals to selfishness and irresistibly invites abuse. Can anyone imagine Moses, Jesus, or Gandhi armed with the moneybags of Carnegie?" Seneca notes that "noble examples stir us up to noble actions, and the very history of large and public souls inspires a man with generous thoughts." While in the words of Thomas Fuller, "Though 'the words of the wise be as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies,' yet their examples are the hammer to drive them in to take the deeper hold. A father that whipped his son for swearing, and swore himself whilst he whipped him, did more harm by his example than good by his correction." Longfellow understood this principle when he sang,

Lives of great men all remind us

We can make our lives sublime,  
And, departing, leave behind us

Footprints on the sands of time.

Footprints, that perhaps another,

Sailing o'er life's solemn main,

A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,  
Seeing, shall take heart again.

## The Text Explained

### The Salutation

(Tit. 1: 1-4)

*Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before times eternal; but in his own seasons manifested his word in the message, wherewith I was intrusted according to the commandment of God our Saviour; to Titus, my true child after a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour.*

The entire first section of the lesson text for today is expressed in a single sentence, a rather complicated sentence; but it is easy to see that it contains several of the great words

which are found in the Divine-human relationship of Christianity. These words are God, Jesus Christ, Saviour, servant, apostle, faith, elect, knowledge, truth, godliness, hope, eternal life, promise, word, message (proclamation, margin), intrusted (that is, responsibility), commandment, grace, and peace. Each of these words may be regarded as a window which opens out on a broad vista, and taken together they constitute a picture of the life in Christ which no worldlying can ever know. (Cf. John 14: 16, 17; 1 Cor. 2: 14.)

This is the only place in Paul's writings where he refers to himself as "a servant of God." (Cf. Rom. 1: 1; James 1: 1.) The term "servant" literally means a *bondservant* (see marginal note), and the idea is that he regarded himself as being

bound to God. This general designation is followed by the special appellation, "an apostle of Jesus Christ." The whole title no doubt was intended to invest Titus with the necessary authority or backing which he would need for the carrying out of the commission which Paul was giving to him. Paul's relationship to God and Christ enabled him to speak for them; and it was the same as if they had spoken personally to Titus themselves. The word "according" was apparently intended to express the purpose of Paul's apostleship. This part of the lesson text is rendered by Williams in these words: "To stimulate faith in God's chosen people and to lead them on to a full knowledge of religious truth, in the hope of eternal life." The New English Bible puts it this way: "Marked as such by faith and knowledge and hope—the faith of God's chosen people, knowledge of the truth as our religion has it, and the hope of eternal life."

In writing of the "hope of eternal life," Paul was not referring to his own personal hope of eternal life, but that the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth, which he was commissioned to bring about, was *in order* that men might have such a hope. The whole system which he was authorized to preach was designed for that purpose. Eternal life is a state of well-being which will continue for ever. Its nature includes both *quality* and *duration*. It begins with the redemption of the soul from sin, that is, from alien sin; and it will continue without end, if we are faithful to our Redeemer. The following comment from Hall L. Calhoun should help all of us to realize the seriousness of life here, if we expect to live eternally with God over there. "One thing seems very certain—viz., that we shall carry with us into the hereafter the personalities we develop here. Character is a matter of our own creation and development. It is what we really are. It cannot be arbitrarily assumed nor gotten rid of. The character that I develop in this life is the one that I shall take with me into the hereafter with which to begin my life there. There is no good reason to suppose that it will be at all different just because I enter another state of being."

The "hope of eternal life" is a cardinal principle of the gospel; and any attempt to reduce Christianity to a way of living in this world with no horizons which reach beyond the temporal and visible, is to deny the basic faith of the early church which cherished an immortal hope of a life beyond this one. The passage now under consideration is a declaration of the reality of that hope, "which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began, and has revealed at his own time in the Message, with the proclamation of which I was entrusted by the command of God our Saviour." (The Twentieth Century New Testament.) When it is said that God cannot lie, that is another way of saying that he always speaks the truth. (Cf. Rom. 3: 4; Heb. 6: 18.) Anything he speaks therefore is true, regardless of the time he spoke it; and it has had or will have its fulfillment in his own good time. (Cf. 2 Pet. 3: 8, 9.) Although God's purpose regarding eternal life was formed before the world began, and his promise regarding it was made long ages ago, full knowledge regarding it was not made until the gospel was proclaimed. Paul, along with the other apostles, was intrusted with the responsibility of preaching this great truth. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 18-20.)

The reference to Titus as Paul's true child after a common faith implies that Titus was converted to Christ by Paul, although we do not know when or where that conversion took place. It has already been pointed out that the name of Titus is not found in the Book of Acts, although it is a known fact that he was active in the work during the time the events of much of the latter part of that history was taking place. Titus is mentioned by name nine times in the Book of Second Corinthians; twice in Galatians; and once each in Second Timothy and the epistle which bears his name. The "common faith" is the faith which is common to all Christians, Paul and Titus, of course, included. (Cf. 2 Pet. 1: 1; Jude 3.)

### The Place of Operation

(Tit. 1: 5)

*For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that were wanting, and ap-*

*point elders in every city, as I gave thee charge.*

The island of Crete is of considerable size and is located in the Mediterranean Sea, almost equidistant from Europe, Asia, and Africa. (See map.) It has already been pointed out that Paul and Titus apparently did some mission work in that area after the apostle's release from his first Roman imprisonment; but we have no way of knowing how long they were there, or whether or not that was the first preaching which was done on the island. But regardless of the amount of preaching which had been done there, the work had not been completed; for there were still things wanting, in addition to the need for the appointment of elders in every city.

We are not specially told what all "the things that were wanting" were, and we can only infer regarding them from that which is said in the letter to Titus. This statement, along with the need for the appointment of elders in every city, would indicate that the congregations were not well enough organized to resist and to repel the inroads which were being made by false teachers, as we shall see in the next section of the lesson text. This defect could, and no doubt would, be remedied, at least to a large extent, by the appointment of elders in each congregation. Elders are the overseers and shepherds of God's people, and the New Testament makes it very clear that each church, when fully set in order, must have a plurality of such men.

The task of selecting the proper men for the eldership carries with it a tremendous responsibility, and especially so when it is remembered that it is often the case that men who are not qualified aspire to the office. Titus therefore would need an authoritative statement from Paul to give him the needed prestige for an acceptable work in carrying out his commission. The apostle had charged his son in the faith to "set in order the things that were wanting, and appoint elders in every city;" and now, here is the letter to confirm the charge and invest Titus with the authority which he would need in carrying out the assignment. And it should be kept in mind that that which Paul wrote to Timothy and

Titus in this respect is still the standard for such work.

### **The Kind of Opposition with Which Titus Had to Deal**

(Tit. 1: 10-16)

*For there are many unruly men, vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped; men who overthrow whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said,*

*Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, idle gluttons. This testimony is true. For which cause reprove them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men who turn away from the truth.*

In giving the qualifications required for the eldership, Paul concludes with these words, "Holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers." (Tit. 1:

9.) And when one reads the section of the lesson text now before us, he can easily see why such men are needed, and why they must be equipped to deal with the opposition. The Lord's church is made up of his people, and no man has the right to enter in among them and poison their minds with false teaching. No sensible man would stand by and allow vicious teachers to indoctrinate the minds of his family with erroneous teaching, and the Lord does not propose to do so either. (Cf. Rev. 2: 2.) John says, "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 him that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works." (2 John 9-11.) Elders and gospel preachers must "be able both to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers."

The materials with which Titus had to work in building up the Cretan churches were of the most rugged kind; and when we consider that he was isolated and un-

supported in this position, it is easy for us to see how much need there was for a strong character for such an assignment. We have already seen something of the kind of man Titus was, and we cannot doubt but that he arose to the occasion and met the standard which Paul set for him, namely, "In all things showing thyself an ensample of good works; in thy doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of us." (Tit. 2: 7, 8.) This is the ideal way to stop the mouths of false teachers. It was Paul's desire "that they may be sound in the faith;" and it was for that reason that he urged Titus to reprove them sharply. This charge to Titus is comparable to that which Paul gave to his other son in the gospel, Timothy. (See 2 Tim. 4: 1-5.) If people would read the Bible and manifest a desire to do right, they would easily see that when they are reprov'd for their shortcomings by a faithful gospel preacher or a godly elder, it is for their own good—that they may be sound in the faith. (Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17.)

To the pure all things are pure:  
but to them, that are defiled and un-

*believing nothing is pure; but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. They profess that they know God; but by their works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.*

The contrast here is between faithful Christians, those who are pure in heart and conscience, and those ascetic teachers, referred to in verse 14, who arbitrarily pronounce some food and practices unclean. (Cf.

1 Tim. 4: 1-5; Rom. 14: 1-6, 20-23.) In his last letter to Timothy, Paul said that the time would come when some would hold a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof (2 Tim. 3: 5); and here we see the principle at work. The deeds of the people about whom Paul wrote to Titus belied their profession, and their knowledge of God was only theoretical. The word "abominable" means detestable, while "reprobate" is worthless or unfit for any good work. When people are unwilling to be molded by God's word (2 Tim. 3: 16, 17), they are unfitted for his service (cf. 2 Tim. 2: 20, 21). People either grow better in the Lord's service, or they grow worse; there is no such thing as standing still in his sight.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

How does the name and character of Titus compare with other New Testament personalities?

How do you account for the omission of his name from the Book of Acts?

Tell something of the degree of prominence which Titus enjoys in Paul's epistles.

What were some of the difficult tasks which were assigned to him?

### The Golden Text

Why is it so important that a gospel preacher or teachers live an exemplary life?

What are some of the direct results of this or consequences which follow its failure?

Discuss the power of example in general.

### The Salutation

What did Paul include in the first sentence of his letter to Titus?

Discuss the various words which have to do with the Divine-human relationship of Christianity.

What is the meaning of being a servant of God and what is unique about the expression here?

Why did Paul mention this relationship when writing to Titus?

What was the purpose of Paul's apostleship?

What does Paul mean by the "hope of eternal life"?

What is eternal life and when does it begin?

What does every redeemed person take with him into eternity?

How did the early Christians feel about eternal life?

What gives reality to the hope of eternal life?

In what way did Paul refer to the relationship which existed between him and Titus?

What is meant by a "common faith"?

### The Place of Operation

Where was Titus working at the time Paul wrote the letter to him?

Where is Crete and what is known of the preaching which was done there?

Why was it necessary that Paul leave Titus in Crete?

Why are elders important to the work and well-being of the churches?

Why is the task of selecting and appointing elders one of great responsibility?

What must always be taken into consideration when such work is done?



The Kind of Opposition with Which  
Titus Had to Deal

What should every elder be able to do?

What was the general situation which  
confronted the churches in Crete?

Why should the mouths of false teachers  
be stopped?

What is the most effective way of doing  
this?

What will happen to a congregation which  
or to an individual who permits false

teachers to "ply their trade" on their  
premises?

What was the nature of the material with  
which Titus had to work in building  
and organizing the churches in Crete?

Why was he told to reprove those in  
error sharply?

What is meant by the statement regard-  
ing things pure and impure?

What is said regarding the profession and  
works of those in error?

## Lesson XI--December 13, 1984

### SOUND DOCTRINE

#### Lesson Text

Tit. 2: 1-10

1 But speak thou the things which  
befit the sound doctrine:

2 That aged men be temperate,  
grave, sober-minded, sound in faith,  
in love, in patience:

3 That aged women likewise be  
reverent in demeanor, not slanderers  
nor enslaved to much wine, teachers  
of that which is good;

4 That they may train the young  
women to love their husbands, to  
love their children,

5 To be sober-minded, chaste,  
workers at home, kind, being in sub-  
jection to their own husbands, that  
the word of God be not blasphemed:

6 The younger men likewise ex-  
hort to be sober-minded:

7 In all things showing thyself an  
ensample of good works; in thy doc-  
trine *showing* uncorruptness, gravity,

8 Sound speech, that cannot be  
condemned; that he that is of the  
contrary part may be ashamed, hav-  
ing no evil thing to say of us.

9 *Exhort* servants to be in subjec-  
tion to their own masters, *and* to be  
well-pleasing *to them* in all things;  
not gainsaying;

10 Not purloining, but showing all  
good fidelity; that they may adorn  
the doctrine of God our Saviour in  
in all things.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Let no man despise thee" (Tit. 2: 15.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Tit. 2: 11-15.

#### Daily Bible Readings

December 7. M.....	Warnings Regarding False Doctrine (Matt. 16: 1-12)
December 8. T.....	Doctrines of Men (Matt. 15: 1-9)
December 9. W.....	Doctrines of Demons (1 Tim. 4: 1-6)
December 10. T.....	Strange Doctrines (Heb. 13: 1-9)
December 11. F.....	Sound Doctrine (Tit. 1: 9; 2: 1)
December 12. S.....	Good Doctrine (1 Tim. 4: 1-6)
December 13. S.....	Obedying the Form of Doctrine (Rom. 6: 1-17)

TIME.—Probably A.D. 67.

PLACES.—Paul was probably in Ephesus; Titus was in Crete.

PERSONS.—Paul and Titus.

#### Introduction

The expression "sound doctrine" (*healthful teaching*, margin) is found only in the letters to Timothy and Titus. (See 1 Tim. 1: 10; 2 Tim. 4: 3; Tit. 1: 9; 2: 1.) The original term for "sound" (*healthful*, margin) is also found in Luke 5: 31; 7: 10; 15: 27;

3 John 2, where the idea is clearly to that of physical health. The original word is also found in 1 Tim. 6: 3 ("*sound* words"); 2 Tim. 1: 13 ("*sound*

words"); Tit. 1: 13 ("*sound* in the faith"); 2: 2 ("*sound* in faith"). Thus it can be seen that in all of the eight occurrences in the letters to Timothy and Titus the term is used in a figurative sense, pretty much as we use the word "wholesome," implying a "healthiness that impresses others favorably, especially as indicative of . . . moral soundness." (Webster's Dictionary of Synonyms). "Sound

doctrine" and "sound words" are the same, as is also "sound in the faith," that is, sound in *the gospel*. The article "the" is in the original in both Tit. 1: 13 and 2: 2. Sound doctrine therefore is that body of inspired teaching which is designed to make the child of God complete in his sight. (Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17; 2 Pet. 1: 3.)

Christianity has been defined as the reproduction of the life of Jesus in the human heart. This is an obligation which belongs to every Christian, or, which is the same thing, every redeemed child of God is under obligation to do his best to reproduce the life of Christ in his own life. Paul expresses this idea in Gal. 4: 19, when he says, "My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you." This means, according to Thayer, "until a mind and life in complete harmony with the mind and life of Christ shall have been formed in you." This development of character is a slow process, and cannot be completed in a day. In the words of Carmack, An act often repeated hardens into a habit; and a habit long continued petrifies into character. An artist one time, so the story goes, had almost complete a statue, but it was not yet dry. While waiting for it to dehydrate, a sudden freeze came upon him at midnight. He could not sleep while thinking of what might happen to his work of art, if the water in its pores should freeze. And then, not thinking so much of himself, he arose and gently placed his own bedclothes around the statue, and began his wait for the day. When his neighbors came into his studio, they found the artist dead, but his work lived! Every Christian should realize that the image of Christ is forming in him; and he should make every sacrifice

to see that the divine work is completed. (Cf. Phil. 2: 12, 13.)

The lesson before us today has a word of practical counsel for several distinct classes of people. Paul knew the value of being definite, and he always had a tremendous reason for the simplest duty—his motives were always great and far-reaching. One of the distinctive features of Christianity is that every act is linked to some eternal purpose, or, to state the same thing in another way, high motives are assigned for all human conduct. In the lesson now before us, the matter of duty is prefaced by a statement regarding sound doctrine. All Christian injunctions and precepts rest on the truth expressed here by Paul. Every child of God should ever keep before him the fact that truth and duty are always linked together. There is no truth which has no corresponding duty; and there is no duty for which there is no corresponding truth. Too many people try to learn truths as if there were no duties belonging to them, and as if the knowing of them makes no difference in the way they live. (Cf. James 1: 23-25; 4: 17.) And because of the attitude just referred to, the hold which many people have on the truth is weak. And in like manner, there are those who are always trying to perform duties as if there were no truths behind them, that is, as if they were mere arbitrary matters which rest on no principle and have no intelligible reason. That is the reason why they perform that which they do so superficially and unreliably. When every truth is rounded into its duty, and every duty is made to depend upon its truth, then we shall have a clearness, a consistency, and a permanence of moral and religious life of which we hardly dream now. This is the idea to be emphasized in the lesson now before us.

## The Golden Text

*"Let no man despise thee."* In his first letter to Timothy, Paul said, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an ensample to them that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity." (1 Tim. 4: 12.) The idea in the apostle's injunction is that the preacher is to conduct himself in such a way as to command the respect of those among whom he

labors. He is aimed with the authority of God's word, and that will make him invulnerable, provided his character and conduct are as they should be. The preacher must take heed to himself and to his teaching; and in so doing he shall save both himself and those who hear him. (See 1 Tim. 4: 16.)

But the preacher is not the only

one who has responsibility in the matter of "despising," those who are taught are also under great obligation. Every gospel preacher has a message from God, and his commission is apostolic. (Cf. 2 Tim. 2: 2; 4: 1-5.) He is therefore qualified to act with full authority. If it is the duty of the preacher to teach the truth, then it is equally the obligation of the hearers to give careful consideration to that which is said. The original word for "despise" means, according to Thayer, "to set one's self in thought beyond (exalt one's self above);" or, to express the same idea in another way, to think around, beyond, and above; and that is exactly what some people do when they are not sincerely seeking the will of God that they may please him. The word for despise in this passage occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. Robertson says that the term in 1 Tim. 4: 12 is a stronger word of scorn, while the one now before us implies the possibility of one's making mental circles around one and so "out-thinking" him. He then goes on to say that the best way for a mod-

ern minister to command respect for his "authority" is to do thinking that will deserve it.

In commenting on the second chapter of Titus, Adam Clarke says, "Few portions of the New Testament excel this chapter. It may well form the creed, system of ethics, and text book of every Christian preacher. Does any man inquire what is the duty of a gospel minister? Send him to the second chapter of the Epistle to Titus for a complete answer. There he will find what he is to *believe*, what he is to *practice*, and what he is to *preach*. Even his congregation is parcelled out for him. The *old* and the *young* of both sexes, and those who are in their employment, are considered to be the objects of his ministry; and a plan of teaching, in reference to those different descriptions of society, is laid down before him. He finds here the *doctrine* which he is to preach to them, the *duties* which he is required to inculcate, the *motives* by which his exhortations are to be strengthened, and the *end* which both he and his people should have invariably in view."

## The Text Explained

### The Aim of Sound Teaching:

(Tit. 2: 1-6)

*But speak thou the things which befit the sound doctrine: that aged men be temperate, grave, sober-minded, sound in faith, in love, in patience: that aged women likewise be reverent in demeanor, not slanderers nor enslaved to much wine, teachers of that which is good; that they may train the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sober-minded, chaste, workers at home, kind, being in subjection to their own husbands that the word of God be not blasphemed: the younger men likewise exhort to be sober-minded.*

In the preceding chapter, Paul described the immoral character of the Cretans, and now, in contrast with that, he urges Titus to impress upon the brethren the need for a well-regulated social order within the church, an order which springs from the saving grace of God, as revealed in Christ. Paul also showed in chapter 1 how false teaching leads away from God; and now he exhorts Titus to speak those things which are be-

coming to sound doctrine, that is, things which are in keeping with sound teaching. It is only by doing this that the desired results can be obtained. The original word for "sound" is *hugiainō*, from which we have our word *hygiene*; and in commenting on the passage now under consideration, The Speaker's Bible says, "The apostle is not describing the teaching which he had given to Timothy and Titus as correct according to some standard, but as healthy and health-giving. It is our word 'hygienic'—the Greek word in English dress. According to St. Paul, 'sound doctrine' is not teaching that has the conventional ring, familiar as the lilt of an old song; it is whatever tends to build up strong men and women, whatever brings a healthy vigor to the limbs, and a buoyant, beautiful life to the soul."

A sinful soul is an unhealthy, diseased soul; and when Paul names the things which bring on such a condition, that is, the things which are contrary to sound doctrine or healthful teaching, he does not mention heresies, as one might expect, but rather vices which are manifestations

of the state of the heart or soul. "But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully, as knowing this, that law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and unruly, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for abusers of themselves with men, for menstealers, for liars, for false swearers, and if there be any other thing contrary to the sound doctrine; according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust." (1 Tim. 1: 8-11.) Healthy teaching, which is according to the gospel, is sufficient for the purpose of counteracting such sinful practices, and for restoring the soul to a state of spiritual health and vigor; but when people refuse to have God in their knowledge, that is, when they will not accept his teaching, then the only alternative is to go from bad to worse. (Cf. 2 Tim. 4: 1-5; Rom. 1: 28-32.)

In making the application, Paul apparently began with the family; for if the family is not what it should be, the church could not be either. Furthermore, the Christian family was something new to the pagan world. It was different from the family which had never come under the influence of the spirit and teaching of Christ. When fathers and mothers recognize and respect their relationship to each other, and to their children; and when children are trained to reverence their parents and others, it is then that a society can be developed which will honor God and be a blessing to itself and to the world about it. The "aged men" are not the elders in the church, but rather the older men; and they should be taught to live a life of self-restraint, that is, not to be excessive in anything. *Grave* means to be dignified, serious, and worthy of respect. *Sober-minded* is to be prudent, thoughtful, and self-controlled. Such a person is *sound in the faith* when he has a correct understanding of the teaching of Christ, and maintains a healthy attitude toward it. This also applies to love and steadfastness.

The older women in the church must conduct themselves in such a manner as to be worthy of reverence; and when that is done, they will enjoy the respect which is due such

people. *Slanderers* are those who utter false reports maliciously, reports which tend to defame or injure the reputation of others. This very term (*diabolos*) is also applied to Satan. (See 1 Pet. 5: 8; Rev. 12: 9, 10; cf. Job 1: 6-12; 2: 1-6.) To be *enslaved to much wine* is to be overcome by the habit of the excessive use of wine as a beverage. Bengel says that it is indeed slavery when one is unable to overcome the appetite, while The Expositor's Greek Testament notes that "it is proved by experience that the reclamation of a woman drunkard is almost impossible." *Teachers of that which is good* is a positive duty of the older women, a duty which is so often either neglected or ignored. Among the good things which they are to teach is that the younger women should love their husbands and their children, which shows that it is possible for the younger women to be trained to be both husband-lovers and children-lovers. (Cf. Eph. 5: 22-33.)

The younger women are also to be *sober-minded*, which means to have a well-balanced mind. To be *chaste* is to be pure in heart and lives. *Workers at home* are home makers, guardians of the home, active in household duties. To be *kind* is to have a gracious, benign disposition; while *being in subjection to their own husbands* is both a duty and a natural consequence, if they love them and have the proper regard for the word of God. This is not only God's will, but it will result in greater happiness and lead to the ultimate good. "In like manner, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, even if any obey not the word, they may without the word be gained by the behavior of their wives; beholding your chaste behavior coupled with fear," that is, the proper regard or respect. (1 Pet. 3: 1, 2.) The marginal reading for "behavior" is *manner of life*. (Cf. verse 16.) In the expression "they may without the word be gained," etc., there is no "the" in the original. The idea is that they may be gained without a word being spoken by the wives; their good example, instead, will likely do the work. Christian people are certain to make some kind of impression on those about them by their lives; and it is not unreasonable to say that the practical worth of religion *is* not

unfairly judged by the effect it has on the life and character of its possessors. Therefore, if the effect of the Christian religion is to make worse wives, it would not only not commend itself to those on the outside, but would actually result in their blaspheming the word upon which the religion is based; for it is a well known fact that many people do not judge doctrine by the doctrine itself: instead, they make the character and conduct of its professors the test of the teaching. (Cf. Rom. 2: 17-24.)

The younger men must be sober-minded, which means to be reasonable, sensible, serious, keep one's head. It is interesting to observe that only one word is used to set forth the moral duty of the younger men, namely, *sober-minded*; but it is evident that this one word includes the whole intention of the apostle's exhortation: for it includes everything in which the moral influence of Christianity may be displayed. The younger men should be made to realize that the future of the church, to a very great extent, depends upon them; for from among their midst will come the future leaders of the Lord's people. And too, a young man who cannot control himself gives little promise of being useful and happy. Indulgence in the sinful practices toward which young men are inclined will ultimately result in the destruction of both body and soul. Younger men are in that period of life when they are exposed to unusual temptations, and they need to exercise peculiar care with reference to their conduct. Young men, as well as the old, are subject to the death of the body; and they should, of course, be ready at all times to stand before God in judgment. A young man who feels that he might soon be called before his Maker will be more likely to be reasonable in all he thinks and does, and learn the meaning and value of what it is to be sensible, serious, and able to keep his own head. (Cf. Psalm 119: 9.)

### Teaching Must Be Enforced by Example

(Tit. 2: 7, 8)

*In all things showing thyself an example of good works; in thy doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sound speech, that cannot be con-*

*demned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of us.*

If a preacher's work is to be effective, he must practice what he preaches; for there is nothing more disgusting than to hear a preacher urge others to do that which he is unwilling to do himself. The context shows that the example which Titus should set was primarily for the young men; but the same principle is true with reference to any and all groups. The doctrine which the gospel preacher sets forth should be characterized by certain definite marks. (1) *Uncorruptness*, that is, pure, unmixed with the philosophies of men. Teach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. (2) *Gravity*, reverent, dignified, serious.

(3) *Sound speech, that cannot be condemned*. This kind of speech does not deviate from the truth (see Thayer); it is beyond reproach, and it cannot be justly condemned. Such teaching has a powerful effect, even upon the opposition. When a person is sound in doctrine, pure in life, and upright in attitude, it is extremely difficult for a critic to find anything upon which he can lay hold and use to discredit the teacher of God's word. The would-be opponent therefore becomes ashamed, because he cannot find anything to oppose; and the result is that no opposition is registered. (Cf. 1 Pet. 2: 11, 12.)

### Even Servants Can Adorn the Doctrine of God

(Tit. 2: 9, 10)

*Exhort servants to be in subjection to their own masters, and to be well-pleasing to them in all things; not gainsaying; not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*

It is probably in order at this point, before commenting directly upon the text now before us, to say a few things regarding Christianity and slavery. It is a noticeable fact that no New Testament writer ever made a direct attack upon slavery as an institution; and not one of them ever commanded, or even suggested, that Christian masters free their slaves. But they did teach a spirit which moderated the harshness of the system, and which ultimately de-

stroyed the institution by peaceful means. Take, for example, the exaltation of the essential dignity and eternal value of the human soul, which the New Testament sets forth. That sounds innocent and harmless enough; but watch it come into collision with the system of slavery! (Read the Book of Philemon.) New Testament writers relied upon the spirit of the gospel, and the principles which it sets forth to the effect that all men are brethren in Christ and alike servants of one heavenly Father, to destroy the whole institution of human slavery. No word of God is void of power (Luke 1: 37), and it is for this reason that no gospel preacher nor any Christian should be afraid to rely upon it for accomplishing anything which is pleasing to God. (Cf. Rom. 1: 16, 17.)

The gospel enjoins people in all walks of life to be exemplary in their conduct. (Cf. 1 Cor. 7: 20-24; 1 Pet. 2: 18.) The harder the lot of the slave, and the more unendurable this might appear to the Christian slave who was conscious of his dignity in Christ, the more necessary it was to impress upon him the necessity of his being in subjection to his master, and to make an honest effort to please

him in all things. This is the true spirit of Christianity, and the principle is still applicable to servants today, all though they are not slaves as men once were. To *gainsay* is to contradict, to speak against, to object to, to argue about a matter; and it is the direct opposite of cheerful and willing obedience. *Purloining* means to take that which has been entrusted to one, and appropriate it for his own use; to steal, to filch. (Cf. Luke 16; 1-8; Josh. 7; 1.) The word for "showing" in the expression "showing all good fidelity" carries with it the idea of demonstrating; and that was done when the servant displayed the utmost trustworthiness. And when a slave, in obedience to the gospel of Christ, could show that he was a better slave because he was a Christian, that was to make the teaching of the Saviour of men attractive to others; or, which is the same thing, adorn the doctrine of God. The word for "adorn" means, according to Arndt-Gingrich, *that they may do credit to the teaching in all respects*. This is what Jesus meant when he said, "Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 5: 16.)

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Discuss the setting and meaning of the expression "sound doctrine."  
What is Christianity?  
What responsibility does every child of God have in this respect?  
In what way is Christianity related to motives?  
How are truth and duty related and what effect does this have on individual Christians?

### The Golden Text

What responsibility does the preacher have in letting no man despise him?  
Where did Paul place the emphasis in the words of the golden text?  
Why should others not despise the preacher?  
What is the literal meaning of the term "despise," as used in the text now before us?  
Discuss the content and value of the second chapter of Titus.

### The Aim of Sound Teaching

Under what circumstance did Paul give the exhortation to speak the things which befit the sound doctrine?

What does he mean by "sound" and what purpose should we have in speaking sound doctrine?

What are some of the characteristics of an unhealthy soul?

What will healthful teaching do and what happens when it is rejected?

Where did Paul tell Titus to begin with his exhortations? Why?

What did he say regarding the aged men?

What of the aged women? Of the younger women?

Why so few words regarding the younger men?

Why is it so important that each one conduct himself according to the instruction?

### Teaching Must Be Enforced by Example

Why is a good example so essential on the part of a preacher?

What effect does preaching without a good example have on others? Give reasons for your answer.

What three things should always characterize effective preaching?

What is the effect of such preaching on the opposition?

What important lesson should all Christians learn in this respect?

Even Servants Can Adorn the  
Doctrine of God

What was the plan and purpose of New  
Testament writers regarding the ques-  
tion of slavery?

Instead of preaching directly against the  
system, what did they do?

What can you say of the effectiveness of  
their plan?

What valuable lesson should we learn  
from this?

What responsibility do all Christians have  
with reference to example?

What special application did this princi-  
ple have to slaves?

What were servants exhorted not to do?

What were they told to do?

What was the purpose behind all of this?

## Lesson XII—December 20, 1964

# DUTIES OF GOSPEL PREACHERS

## Lesson Text

Tit. 3: 1-10

1 Put them in mind to be in sub-  
jection to rulers, to authorities, to  
be obedient, to be ready unto every  
good work,

2 To speak evil of no man, not to  
be contentious, to be gentle, showing  
all meekness toward all men.

3 For we also once were foolish,  
disobedient, deceived, serving divers  
lusts and pleasures, living in malice  
and envy, hateful, hating one an-  
other.

4 But when the kindness of God  
our Saviour, and his love toward  
man, appeared,

5 Not by works *done* in righteous-  
ness, which we did ourselves, but  
according to his mercy he saved us,  
through the washing of regeneration  
and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

6 Which he poured out upon us  
richly, through Je'-sus Christ our  
Saviour;

7 That, being justified by his grace,  
we might be made heirs according to  
the hope of eternal life.

8 Faithful is the saying, and con-  
cerning these things I desire that  
thou affirm confidently, to the end  
that they who have believed God  
may be careful to maintain good  
works. These things are good and  
profitable unto men:

9 But shun foolish questionings,  
and genealogies, and strifes, and  
fightings about the law; for they are  
unprofitable and vain.

10 A factious man after a first and  
second admonition refuse.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*Preach the word.*” (2 Tim. 4: 2.)  
DEVOTIONAL READING.—Tit. 3: 11-15.

## Daily Bible Readings

December 14. M.....	Gospel to be Preached (Mark 16: 13-20)
December 15. T.....	Corrupt Gospel to Be Avoided (Gal. 1: 6-9)
December 16. W.....	Saved through Preaching (1 Cor. 1: 20-31)
December 17. T.....	Duties of Gospel Preachers (2 Tim. 4: 1-10)
December 18. F.....	A Good Minister of Christ (1 Tim. 4: 6-16)
December 19. S.....	Paul's Attitude Toward the Gospel (Rom. 1: 13-17)
December 20. S.....	Saved by the Gospel (1 Cor. 15: 1-3)

Time.—Probably A.D. 67.

Places.—Paul was probably in Ephesus; Titus was in Crete.

PERSONS.—Paul and Titus.

## Introduction

The term “preaching,” as used to-  
day, means to proclaim the gospel or  
deliver a sermon. The preacher  
therefore is a messenger; and if he is  
a faithful gospel preacher, he is en-  
gaged in one of the noblest works  
possible to man. Gospel preaching  
was and is ordained of God; it is de-  
livering the message of his Son. 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. (1) They are  
used to describe “inspired preach-  
ing,” such as was done by the apos-  
tles when they, for the first time,  
made known the glad tidings of sal-

vation. (See 1 Cor. 1: 21; 2: 9, 10; Rom. 10: 14, 15; cf. Tit. 1: 3; Gal. 1: 11, 12.) It is important that this use of the terms be carefully kept in mind when studying the New Testament. (2) The words "preach" and "preacher" are also used to indicate a proclaimer of that which the inspired apostles had already made known. (See 2 Tim. 2: 2; 4: 1-5.) All preaching today, of course, is uninspired preaching. The word of God, that is, the message to be taught, has been fully revealed (cf. Jude 3; Gal. 1: 6-9), and it is our business to learn its meaning and proclaim its truths to others.

The ministry of preaching has been a practice among the followers of Christ since his kingdom was established; and this kind of work was responsible, probably more than any other, for the rapid growth and development of the early church; and the same has been true on down through the ages. There is no substitute for faithful gospel preaching. But there is something about this question which is not always realized by the people, generally speaking, namely, no preacher can fulfil his mission, unless those to whom he ministers understand something of how he is fitted to serve them. (Cf. the work of a physician, a lawyer, and other professional people. If we do not know how they can help us, then we will not likely avail ourselves of their services; and just so it is with preachers and preaching.) Every one who has any conception of what it means to be loyal to Christ

readily understands that all preaching which meets with his approval must be in harmony with the doctrine of the New Testament. (See Tit. 2: 1; 2 Tim. 4: 1, 2.)

Preachers are looked upon as leaders of men, and that is as it should be; but if they are not permitted to offer the benefit of their knowledge and experience, they are to that extent handicapped in the possibilities of their service. Inasmuch as preachers are constantly dealing with God's word, it should be assumed, of course, that they know more about the Bible than any other class of men; and it is but natural when one has a question which troubles him, or who desires information on any vital biblical question, that he should turn to the preacher for assistance. And any faithful gospel preacher should be willing to give whatever help he can; and he should be able to tell whether or not the question or subject matter under consideration is worthy of serious study, and if so, what the Bible says about it. And too, preachers should use every opportunity they have for the public proclamation of the gospel. Preaching is a solemn obligation, and every preacher worthy of the name, should have some definite objectives in mind when he proclaims the truth of the Lord to others. For example, all gospel preaching should endeavor (1) to enlighten the mind, (2) to disturb the conscience, (3) to energize the will, and (4) to stir the heart. If all of these things are done effectively, then good is almost certain to follow.

### The Golden Text

*"Preach the word."* One preaches the word when he makes known that which has been revealed through inspired men, explains its meaning, and makes the proper application to those for whom the message is intended. The full context in which the words of the golden text are found shows what Paul means by preaching the word. "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." (2 Tim. 4: 1-5.)

Preaching is not something which we may or may not engage in, just to suit our own conveniences and fancies. It was ordained by God himself, and commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles. Gospel preaching proceeds from the basic conviction that life, if acceptable to God, must be lived on his terms; and that his will regarding man is revealed in Christ Jesus. (Cf. Matt. 7: 21-23; 1 Cor. 2: 1, 2.) Every normal



individual has what is known as a "frame of reference" to which he consciously or subconsciously refers his questions as to what he shall or shall not do, or what he shall or shall not believe. This "frame of reference," however, is not always dependable, worthy, or intelligent; if it were, then the Bible would not be needed. The purpose of preaching is to call attention to the fact that God's word is the standard to which all people must conform if they would enjoy his blessings which he has prepared for them. (Cf. Isa. 55: 8, 9.)

When Jesus commissioned his disciples to proclaim his message of salvation to all the world, he said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation." (Mark 16: 15.) The apostles and other New Testament Christians were faithful to that commission; and if one will take the time to read some of their sermons which are recorded in the New Testament, he can easily see what they understood by the injunction,

"Preach the word." (See Acts 2: 14-41; 13: 16-41.) If any one will read through the Bible, he will be impressed with the fact that God has always depended upon his word to accomplish his purpose, whether with reference to creation, the preservation of the world, or the redemption and sanctification of the human race. (Cf. Psalm 33: 6, 9; 2 Pet. 3: 5-7; Rom. 1: 16; 1 Pet. 1: 22-25; Acts 20: 32.) In speaking of his aim regarding his word, Jehovah says, "For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, and giveth seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Isa. 55: 10, 11; cf. Luke 1: 37; Matt. 19: 26.) Let every gospel preacher therefore be content to preach the word!

## The Text Explained

### The Christian Attitude toward Unbelievers

(Tit. 3: 1-3)

*Put them in mind to be in subjection to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready unto every good work, to speak evil of no man, not to be contentious, to be gentle, showing all meekness toward all men. For we also once were foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.*

Taking an over-all view of Tit. 2: 1-3: 11, we have a sketch of the true features of Christian character which Titus was exhorted to develop and enforce. The entire second chapter is devoted to the social order which Christians should endeavor to maintain among themselves, along with the motive which should prompt their action; while the first eleven verses of chapter 3, the section from which our lesson for today is taken, set forth the attitude which the Lord's people should manifest toward the world about them, together with the motive which should actuate them. Christianity affects the entire relationship of those who embrace it. The apostle recognizes that the influence of the church will

depend, not only upon the truth of the gospel and the effective manner in which it is presented, but also on the lives of the Christians themselves. This is especially true in their relationship with those who are outside the church. The Lord's people are obligated to put into practice the gospel which they accept and proclaim.

The expression "put them in mind" is used in the sense of bringing to their attention that which the Lord has ordained for them, that is, to be in subjection to rulers and authorities. The term "ruler" indicates an officer of the first rank, probably in this case the emperor; while "authorities" are high governmental officials. Nero, the last in the line of Caesars, was the emperor at the time Paul wrote the letter from which our lesson text is taken, and was a violent persecutor of Christians; and yet the Lord's people were told to be in subjection to him. The fact that Paul exhorted the Christians in Ephesus to *pray* for all such high officials, including Nero who was emperor at the time Paul wrote to Timothy (1 Tim. 2: 1, 2), while in the case of the Cretans he enjoined only the more elementary duty of *obedience*, may indicate to some ex-

tent the difference in the cultural status of the two peoples. Rom. 13: 1-7 and 1 Pet. 2: 13-17 are a good commentary on the passage now under consideration. There is no practical difference between being "in subjection to" and in being "obedient" to rulers and authorities. Technically speaking, one is in subjection to another when he subordinates himself to him, and he obeys his superior when he does that which he is told to do. The term "good" in the expression "to be ready unto every *good* work" is significant, since it suggests the limits wherein Christians are to be ready to obey the will of rulers and authorities; they are not to do evil that good may come. (See Acts 4: 19, 20; 5: 29; cf. Esth. 3: 1-3.)

"To speak evil of no man" means not to speak reproachfully, rail at, revile, or calumniate anyone, and especially the rulers and authorities. This is a sin which is all too common among professed Christians today. To be "contentious" is to be quarrelsome, attacking others, and generally unwilling to cooperate and be obedient. (Cf. 1 Tim. 3: 3.) Christians should be "gentle" in their attitude toward others, and especially those who oppose them. Instead of demanding that their rights be respected, the Lord's people should manifest a spirit of forbearance. (See Phil. 4: 5, where the marginal reading is *gentleness*.) "Meekness" is gentleness of strength. (Cf. 2 Cor. 10: 1.) All of the terms in the first two verses of the lesson text will give some idea of the kind of people Christians should be, in contrast with their former life, as set forth in verse 3. It frequently happens that Christian people are inclined to lose patience with those who are living in the flesh; whereas, if they would only take the time to review their own past lives, they would soon realize that they do not have anything to boast of. Furthermore, when we remember that we are a living example of what the grace of God can do for those who are in sin, we should not conclude too quickly that the people about us who have not yet obeyed the gospel are hopeless. The meaning of most of the terms which Paul used to describe the former manner of the lives of the Cretans is obvious. When he

said that they were "hateful, hating one another," he apparently meant that they provoked the hatred of others by their detestable conduct, and in turn hated the ones in whom they had stirred up the hatred.

What the Kindness of God  
Does for Sinners  
(Tit. 3: 4-7)

*But when the kindness of God our Saviour, and his love toward man, appeared, 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, which he poured out upon us richly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

Paul, in this section of the lesson text, is continuing his efforts to show the Lord's people that they should not exalt themselves, and look down upon those who are still in sin. The salvation which we enjoy is not due to any merit of our own, but rather to the kindness and love of God. The word "kindness" is used in the sense of goodness (cf. Rom. 2: 4; 3:

12), while the term "love" is *love for mankind*. The original word for "love" in this passage is *philanthropia*, from which we have philanthropy. Our salvation, then, is due to the kindness or goodness of God, which was born of his love for the fallen race. The kindness and love of God, or the plan for saving the lost, *appeared*, that is, was manifested or displayed in the coming of Christ and the perfecting of the gospel. (Cf. Tit. 2: 11.)

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 usual viewpoints which have characterized the discussion in the light of the inspired record, he will soon see that one of the principal causes of disagreement on the subject is a failure to recognize the fact that the term "works" is used in two senses in the New Testament. Many people seem to think that works in connection with salvation will automatically rule out salvation by faith. But it is doubtful if there would have been

any serious question regarding the place which works have in the gospel plan of salvation, had it not been for the action of Martin Luther in inserting the word "only" following the term *faith* in Rom. 3: 28. His aim apparently was to contrast the system of faith with the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification by works, but it will have to be admitted that his action was extremely unfortunate. The idea which his daring act introduced into religious thinking affected the whole complex of the question now before us; for it forced a contradiction between Rom. 3 and James 2, and left the impression that the Scriptures, without Luther's idea, do not teach justification by faith which, of course, is not true. (Cf. Rom. 5: 1.)

When Paul said, "Not by works done in righteousness, *which we did ourselves*" he meant exactly what he stated in Eph. 2: 8, 9, where he said, "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." Our salvation is the gift of God—"according to," that is, because of or as a result of "his mercy." Salvation was provided or made possible through "the grace" (the article is in the original) on God's part, and is received or appropriated by *faith* on our part. "Not of works" (Eph. 2: 9) is equivalent to "not of yourselves" (Eph. 2: 8) and "not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves" (Tit. 3: 5). There was nothing which we did, or could do, that made our salvation possible; we only accepted by faith that which was provided or made possible for us through God's grace and mercy. The "works," then, which we did not do were clearly *meritorious works*, or works which, in and of themselves, could procure the desired end, that is, our salvation. If that had happened, there would have been grounds for glorying or boasting on our part; but, according to Paul, it did not happen, "that no man should glory." (Eph. 2: 9; cf. Rom. 4: 1-5.) There is therefore a vast difference between "meritorious works" and *obedience which springs from faith*. Neither Paul, nor any other New Testament writer, ever placed "obedience of faith" (Rom. 1: 5; 16: 26) in contrast with or in opposition to

"faith," nor is such obedience ever represented as making faith void, as meritorious works would have done. (See Rom. 4: 14.)

"The washing of regeneration," or the *laver* of generation, as given in the margin, is, according to Arndt-Gingrich, "the bath that brings about regeneration." It is the same thing that Jesus meant by the new birth (John 3: 5), and what Peter means when he says, "Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 3: 21.) Vincent says, "The phrase *laver of regeneration* distinctly refers to baptism, in connection with which and through which es a medium regeneration is conceived as taking place. (Cf. Rom. 6: 3-5.) It is true that nothing is said of *faith*; but baptism implies faith on the part of its recipient. It has no regenerating effect apart from faith; and the renewing of the Holy Spirit is not bestowed if faith be wanting." (Acts 2: 38, 39.)

The "renewing of the Holy Spirit" follows our conversion to Christ, and continues through the Christian life. (Cf. Eph. 2: 10; 2 Cor. 4: 16; Col. 3: 10; Rom. 12: 2; 6: 4.) The "renewing" begins when the redeemed child of God becomes a "new creature" (2 Cor. 5: 17). It is the renewing which is "effected by the Holy Spirit, Tit. 3: 5." (Thayer.) The present passive participle in Col. 3: 10 indicates a continuous refreshing of the new man in Christ Jesus, or, as the present indicative passive of 2 Cor. 4: 16 declares, "our inward man is renewed day by day."

The Holy Spirit is promised to all obedient believers (John 7: 37-39; Acts 2: 38, 39; 5: 32), and the statement of the text simply affirms the fulfillment of that promise. The expression "poured out" is used in a figurative sense (the Holy Spirit is personalized in the New Testament). (See Acts 2: 17, 18, 33.) The expression literally means that the Holy Spirit is given to Christians according to the promise of the gospel. (Cf. Gal. 3: 14—"through *the* faith" in the original, that is the gospel; cf. Acts 6: 7.) The word "justified" is used in the sense of having been

acquitted and declared righteous or acceptable to God. Paul calls this "imputed" righteousness in Romans, that is, righteousness which has been *ascribed* to the obedient believer in Christ. (Cf. Rom. 4.) Therefore, having begun this life in Christ, we are "heirs according to the hope of eternal life," that is, we hope to continue to live in eternity. "And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (1 John 3: 3.)

### The End in View and a Final Exhortation

(Tit. 3: 8-10)

*Faithful is the saying, and concerning these things I desire that thou affirm confidently, to the end that they who have believed God may be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men: but shun foolish questionings, and genealogies, and strifes, and fightings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. A factious man after a first and second admonition refuse.*

The "saying" which Paul says is faithful apparently refers to the doctrinal statement contained in verses 4-7 regarded as a single concept—as we, when speaking of the Incarnation, sum up in one term the whole teaching of the Scriptures on that subject. (See The Expositor's Greek Testament, *in loco*.) "These things"

evidently refer to the various topics which the apostle mentioned in the statement just mentioned, that is, verses 4-7. It could, of course, have a broader view, and include the practical teaching of the entire epistle. Believers are expected to work in God's vineyard, and the things which Paul has discussed, whether in the immediate context or the entire epistle, will give Christian people an idea of that which the Lord expects them to do. Such service is profitable to the Lord's people; but there are also some things which must be avoided, if a well-rounded character is to be developed, such as those mentioned in verse 9. "A factious man" is not one who contends for the truth in the face of opposition; for if that makes a man a heretic, then every reformer, regardless of the correctness of his views, would be a factious man. A factious man, such as Paul is speaking of, is one who introduces questions and practices which are clearly out of harmony with the teaching of the New Testament. It is not very difficult to identify a factious man, even aside from his teaching; for his very disposition betrays him. (Cf. 1 Cor. 11: 16; 1 John 2: 19; 1 Cor. 11: 19.) Paul's full statement regarding a factious man is as follows: "A factious man after a first and second admonition refuse; knowing that such a one is perverted, and sinneth, being self-condemned." (Tit. 3: 10, 11.)

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

Discuss the New Testament uses of the terms "preach" and "preacher."

What kind of preaching do we always have today?

What has been the general contribution of preaching to the growth and development of the church?

What should be the Christian attitude toward preachers?

What are some of the purposes of gospel preaching?

### The Golden Text

What does it mean to preach the word?

Why is preaching so essential?

Show how the apostles went about preaching the word.

What has Jehovah said regarding the effectiveness of his word?

### The Christian Attitude toward Unbelievers

Discuss the setting of the first section of the lesson text for today.

Why is it so important that Christians conduct themselves properly before the world?

What must be the Christian's attitude toward world rulers? Why is this so?

Why did Paul say be ready unto every good work?

In what sense are we to speak evil of no man?

What is meant by a contentious man?

What does it mean to be gentle and meek?

What should be our general attitude toward people who have not obeyed the gospel? Why?

### What the Kindness of God Does for Sinners

What is the purpose of this section of the lesson text?

What method of saving the lost does Paul emphasize here?

What place do "works" occupy in the New Testament plan for saving the lost?

In what way is our salvation from alien sins brought about?  
 What is the washing of regeneration? Give reasons for your answer.  
 What is the renewing of the Holy Spirit?  
 In what sense is the Holy Spirit poured out on believers? Give reasons for your answer.  
 What does it mean to be justified?

The End in View and a Final Exhortation  
 What "saying" does Paul say is faithful? What "things" did he want Titus to affirm confidently?  
 What does God expect of his people? What are some things which gospel preachers should avoid?  
 What is meant by a factious man? How should such a person be dealt with?

### Lesson XIII—December 27, 1964

## PAUL'S REGARD FOR TIMOTHY AND TITUS

### Lesson Text

Phil. 2: 19-24; Gal. 2: 1-5

19 But I hope in the Lord Je'-sus to send Tim'-o-thy shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.

20 For I have no man likeminded, who will care truly for your state.

21 For they all seek their own, not the things of Je'-sus Christ.

22 But ye know the proof of him, that, as a child *serveth* a father, so he served with me in furtherance of the gospel.

23 Him therefore I hope to send forthwith, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me:

24 But I trust in the Lord that I myself also shall come shortly.

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.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Grace be with you." (1 Tim. 6: 21.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Phil. 4: 21-23.

### Daily Bible Readings

December 21.	M. All Disciples Members of the Same Body (1 Cor. 12: 12-31)
December 22.	T.....Esteem for Faithful Brethren (1 Cor. 16: 15-18)
December 23.	W.. Know Them That Labor Among You (1 Thess. 5: 12-21)
December 24.	T.....Desire to See Faithful Brethren (1 Thess. 2: 17-20)
December 25.	F.....Thankfulness for the Brethren (Phil. 1: 1-11)
December 26.	S.....An Exhortation (Phil. 4: 1-7)
December 27.	S.....A Faithful Minister (Col. 1: 3-8)

TIME.—Philippians was written probably in A.D. 63 or 64; Galatians was written in A.D. 57.

PLACES.—Paul was in Rome when he wrote Philippians; in Corinth when he wrote Galatians; Philippi, and Galatia.

PERSONS.—Paul, the Philippian brethren, and the Galatian churches.

### Introduction

Aside from that of Christ Jesus himself, it is doubtful if there is a greater name connected with Christianity than that of the apostle Paul. He was at first a bitter enemy, due to his misunderstanding; but when

he saw the light, he allowed no man to excel him in the devotion to and the proclamation of the cause for which the Lord gave his life. After more than twenty years of faithful and arduous labors, he had so com-

pletely covered the eastern part of the Roman Empire as to be able to say "that from Jerusalem, and round about even unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ; so much so, that there was "no more any place in these regions" for him to labor. (See Rom. 15: 19, 23.) And then about four years later he was able to tell the Colossians that the gospel had been preached in all creation under heaven. (Col. 1: 23.) But Paul did not work alone; for it was Jesus who redeemed him and completely changed the direction of his life. (Cf. Phil. 3: 12.) Through the Holy Spirit, he directed his thinking and his work which, of course, included his preaching and his writing; Paul lay, as it were, in the hands of God, as Christ through the Spirit enabled him to speak, work, and write. His work and words still stand as the work and words of God for men; and if Paul, undoubtedly the greatest exponent of Christianity the world has ever seen, were asked to describe himself, he doubtless would reply simply, "A man in Christ." (2 Cor. 12: 2.)

It was apparently on his first great missionary journey that Paul met a young man named Timothy, who evidently lived in Lystra; and it is very probable that the great apostle and missionary converted him to Christ during his stay in that city. And from Paul's reference to Timothy's mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1: 5; cf. 3: 15), it is fair to assume that they were also led to Christ at that time. After the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15) and following another stay in Antioch, Paul, in company with Silas, began his second missionary journey; and when they reached Lystra they found that Timothy had developed to the point that he was asked to join the mission-

aries, probably in the capacity as an attendant. (Cf. Acts 13: 5.) We know that Silas was a prophet (Acts 15: 32), and when this fact is considered in the light of 1 Tim. 1: 18, it is very reasonable to suppose that Silas was the one, along with Paul, who saw the possibilities which Timothy possessed. At any rate, we know that Timothy became a very devoted servant of the Lord, and was thoroughly dependable, so far as Paul was concerned, to the very last.

Titus too, was converted to Christ by Paul, since he refers to him as "my true child after a common faith" (Tit. 1: 4); but we have no information regarding the time and circumstance of his becoming a Christian. The earliest mention of Titus in the New Testament, chronologically speaking, is in Gal. 2: 1-5. This was in connection with the Jerusalem conference; and it appears that he was taken from Antioch to Jerusalem as a representative of the Gentile churches, as we would say a test case. Paul refused to allow him to be circumcised, as we shall see further on in this lesson. The facts surrounding this trip to Jerusalem have led some scholars to think that Titus probably lived in Antioch; and if so, it may well have been that he was converted there during Paul's labors in that city. It was pointed out in an earlier lesson in this series that the degree of prominence which Titus enjoys in Paul's letters leads one to think that he was evidently one of the most congenial and useful of all of the apostle's assistants. Conybeare and Howson note that "if we put together these notices, scanty as they are, of the conduct of Titus, they set before us a character which seems to claim our admiration for a remarkable union of enthusiasm, integrity, and discretion."

### The Golden Text

"Grace be with you." When we think of the word "grace" we usually think of it in terms of *favor* or that which is pleasing. Grace is, of course, a Bible word, and when it is mentioned in connection with God, it does mean his favor or his blessings toward his people. In discussing the subject of grace, Baker's Dictionary of Theology says, "The essence of

the doctrine of grace is that God is for us. What is more, he is for us who in ourselves are against him. More still, he is not for us merely in a general attitude, but has effectively acted toward us. Grace is summed up in the name Jesus Christ." The truthfulness of the statement just quoted can be seen by reading Tit. 2: 11, 12: "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." God's grace, indeed, cannot be separated from his Son Jesus Christ.

Different translations of the New Testament present various renderings of the passage which serves as the golden text for today's lesson. *The Living Oracles*, "Favor be with you"; *Williams*, "Spiritual blessing be with you all"; *The Twentieth Century New Testament*, "God bless you all." Nichol and Whiteside note that "Grace is favor, sometimes defined as unmerited favor. It must be embodied in some benefit supplying some need. To be of any benefit a gift must be usable. To throw a drowning man a deed to a diamond mine in South Africa would not supply his needs, for he could not use it; and, in no sense, would it be grace to him. And to offer the sinner a salvation that he is unable to appropriate is not grace, or favor." Any blessing therefore which may

be described as the grace of God must be something which will meet definite needs on the part of those who receive it.

When Paul penned the words of the golden text to Timothy, he was, in effect, asking God to bless his son in the gospel; and what greater favor could a father ask for his child, than to commit him to the care of the All-Wise and Benevolent Father of all mankind? And what Paul wrote to Timothy, he also wrote to Titus; and while each of the three pastoral epistles is addressed to an individual, Timothy and Titus, the term "you" in each of the benedictions (in the text of Westcott and Hort) is in the plural (*humōn*). In the case of Second Timothy, the benediction reads, "The Lord be with *thy* (singular) spirit. Grace be with you (plural)." The word "all" is added in Titus, but the meaning is no different from that of both letters to Timothy; "you" in all three instances is plural, and to make the idea clear, as The Interpreter's Bible observes, the translation should read, "Grace be with you all," meaning Timothy and all the Lord's people who were with him.

## The Text Explained

### Paul's Appraisal of Timothy (Phil. 2: 19-24)

*But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will care truly for your state. For they all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a child serveth a father, so he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel. Him therefore I hope to send forthwith, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me: but I trust in the Lord that I myself also shall come shortly.*

Those who are familiar with the writings of Paul are aware of the fact that there was, apparently, no church which was closer to his heart, than the church in Philippi. And it is also a well known fact that Timothy was closely identified with the work there from its very beginning. The first known group of missionaries who preached the gospel in Philippi included Timothy. He had, only a short time before, accepted

the invitation to accompany Paul and Silas on what was Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 16: 1-3); and we learn from the "we" passage of Acts 16: 6-15 that Luke also joined the group at Troas. The passage just referred to, along with the next two paragraphs of the chapter (Acts 16) set forth the principal facts regarding the origin of the church in Philippi. And if one will read the entire letter to the church in Philippi, he will learn much of the personal relationship which characterized Paul and his brethren there. They had assisted the apostle in his missionary endeavors in other places, and had endeavored to relieve his needs, insofar as they were able, while he was in the Roman prison, the place from which he wrote the letter to them.

There are many doctrinal and practical matters found in Paul's letter to the Philippians, for his first consideration was their spiritual welfare; but there are also many personal references found in it too, the majority of which center around Epaphroditus and Timothy, loved

alike by both Paul and the Philippian brethren. Epaphroditus had been sent to Rome by the church in Philippi with a gift for Paul, and probably to do what he could by way of ministering to the apostle; and in the discharge of those duties he had become violently ill. This, of course, greatly distressed Paul; and when the news got to Philippi, the church was troubled too. Paul felt that he had to send Epaphroditus back home; but he also felt that it was essential that he send a letter by him to them in which he explained why their messenger was returning. Paul did not want his brethren in Philippi, when they saw their messenger to him on the streets of their city, to wonder why he had come home, and to ask whether or not Paul had been acquitted; and if not, why he had left his place at the apostle's side. (Cf. Acts 15: 36-38.)

It appears that Paul's first thoughts were for his beloved brethren in Philippi; but when they had been properly informed regarding Epaphroditus and the discharge of his mission to Rome, the apostle himself would be deeply interested in learning of the reaction of the Philippian brethren to his letter. He could not himself, of course, go to them; but there was a mutually trusted friend whom he could send in his stead, namely, Timothy. The purpose which Paul had in mind for sending Timothy is clearly stated in these words: "But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state." In saying that he had "no man likeminded, who will care truly for your state," Paul was probably summing up the situation as it existed with him then in Rome, that is, there was no one there at the time who was willing to make the sacrifice which would be involved in such an effort, other than Timothy.

How often have we seen this same principle at work in our day. Someone needs to be visited and encouraged in the work of the Lord; but the ones who are approached for such an undertaking have something, of a selfish nature, which they had rather do than to minister spiritually to those who might need their assistance, or who might by such a visit be able to convey a message of

hope to someone who is anxious about their welfare, but who cannot himself go and see about them. There are often many occasions when an effort on our part would do much to relieve the anxiety of interested people, as well as to strengthen the faith of others. And furthermore, it is wonderful for good people to have enough confidence in us to feel free to call upon us for such service. Not only do such occasions give us the opportunity to help others; they also make it possible for us to demonstrate what it means to live according to the Golden Rule. (See Matt. 7: 12.) Timothy had repeatedly demonstrated his worth by the service which he had rendered in the gospel of Christ; and as long as Paul himself was unable to make the trip to Philippi, he could confidently depend upon his son in the faith to act in his stead.

#### The Use of Titus to Demonstrate a Principle (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. But not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: and that because of 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 sometimes difficult for us to realize that it was necessary for Paul to give historical proof of the independence of his apostleship; but the great zeal of the Judaizers of his day made that necessary. While on the first great missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas had established the Galatian churches (see Acts 13, 14); and when they returned from that journey, they went to Antioch from whence they began it. It was during this stay in Antioch that certain Judaizing teachers came to that



city "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.) This is the beginning of the background against which the second chapter of Galatians, verses 1-10, was written.

The time had come in the history of the church when the issue regarding the Gentiles and the law of Moses had to be settled. The Jewish brethren, at first, had opposed the admission of Gentiles into the church at all; but when the clear revelation of the Lord's will regarding the matter was made through Peter, following his experience with Cornelius and his household (Acts 10: 1-11: 18), that phase of the question was settled once and for all. But following that, a new issue was raised, namely, that of requiring all Gentile converts to be circumcised. This would obligate them to keep the law of Moses. But Paul knew that this was not God's will, and he was led, through divine revelation, to take the lead in settling this issue too.

As observed earlier in this series, we do not know anything about the life of Titus, prior to the incident recorded in this section of the lesson text; but it could have been that he lived in Antioch, and was converted there by the apostle Paul. At any rate, Titus was selected, apparently, as a test case, in an effort to reach an agreement regarding the question of requiring the Gentiles to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses. The very circumstances surrounding such a situation would demand that such a person be above reproach; for if that were not the case, then the opposition could very easily use his defects to destroy the whole effectiveness of the proposition which Paul was seeking to establish. It is easy to see from the context that the messengers from the church in Antioch were completely successful in their undertaking; and from that time onward, as may be gleaned from the letters of Paul, Titus was a tower of strength in furthering the

cause of Christ during the early days of the church.

### The Places of Timothy and Titus in Christianity (1 Tim. 4: 12; Tit. 2: 7, 8)

Those who are accustomed to the use of commentaries in Bible study are aware of the fact that many able students flatly deny that Paul wrote the three letters which were addressed to Timothy and Titus. Several of these men claim that there is no room in Paul's life, as set forth in Acts and his other epistles, for the events alluded to in the three letters which we have been considering. This claim is true, and if it can be proved that Paul was put to death at the conclusion of his first Roman imprisonment (cf. Acts 28: 30, 31), then we have a real problem on hand. Conybeare and Howson are frank to say that although the answer to this question has been a subject of dispute in modern times, no doubt was entertained regarding it in the ancient church. It was universally believed by the early Christians that Paul's appeal to Caesar (Acts 25: 11, 12) terminated successfully; that he was acquitted of the charges against him; and that he spent some years in freedom before he was again imprisoned, condemned, and executed. The evidence on this subject, these same authors continue, though (as stated before) not copious, is yet conclusive so far as it goes, and it is all one way.

If Paul was released from his first Roman imprisonment, as the testimony seems to indicate, and had some four or five more years for preaching the gospel and planting churches, it appears reasonable to suppose that he had both the time and the opportunity for all the events alluded to in the pastoral epistles. If this is granted, there does not seem to be any sound reason for denying the Pauline authorship of the letters to Timothy and Titus. These letters contain information which is indispensable to church organization and the work of gospel preachers; and the church today would be poor indeed if we did not have them.

It is neither wise nor fair to array Timothy and Titus against each other; for they were two different

personalities, and each had his own talents to use and work to do. But from the over-all picture we have of the two men, it appears that Timothy was probably the younger and perhaps the more sensitive. Titus was probably better fitted to deal with rugged and difficult situations. Evidence of the truthfulness of this last statement may be seen by considering Titus' assignment with reference to the rebellious Corinthian church and among the churches in Crete. The Corinthian brethren had all but disowned Paul as their spiritual leader, but it was the apostle's letter, re-forced by Titus' presence and persuasive words which brought about the joyful reconciliation. The last reference to Titus in the New Testament is found in 2 Tim. 4: 9-12. The defection of Demas has cast a suspicion of Titus and others mentioned along with him; but in view of the life of faithful sacrifice in carrying out difficult assignments which this man of God so often demonstrated, it is refreshing to think, along with Conybeare, Howson, and others, that Paul himself, in his own self-forgetfulness for the cause of Christ had sent his son in the faith to Dalmatia. In fact, here is a case where character comes to his rescue, and frees Titus from all thought of suspicion, when all the facts are considered.

The last letter which Paul ever wrote, that is, so far as is known, was addressed to Timothy. It is the letter which contains the clearest charge we have on record to gospel preachers; and when we consider the circumstances under which it was written, it will touch the heart of everyone who reads it. It contains the final advice to Paul's son in the gospel, a son, apparently naturally timid and sensitive, who had to be left behind to face the hardships involved in opposing the heresies which threatened to destroy the very essence of Christianity. Paul's plea for Timothy to give diligence to come before winter is suggestive of the urgency with which men should turn to Christ before the opportunity is forever taken away from them. "Come before winter!" Come before the haze of Indian summer has faded from the fields! Come before the November winds strip the leaves from the trees and sends them whirling to the ground! Come before the snow covers the countryside and the streams turn to ice! Come before the heart is cold and desire has failed! Come before your life is over and you must stand before God in judgment to give an account of the use you have made of the opportunities which in his grace he has given to you! Come before winter!

### 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 manner in which Paul did his work as a Christian?  
Discuss his success as a gospel preacher.  
In what way, apparently, did he come in contact with Timothy?  
How did Timothy come to be associated with Paul in the work of the Lord?  
When do we first learn of Titus?  
What kind of record did Titus always maintain? Give reasons for your answer.

#### The Golden Text

What is the meaning of grace?  
In what way did God manifest his grace to the human race?  
What did Paul mean by saying, "Grace be with you"?  
Whom does "you" include? Give reasons for your answer.

#### Paul's Appraisal of Timothy

What kind of relationship existed between Paul and the church in Philippi?

How was Timothy related to that church?  
Under what circumstances was the church in Philippi established?  
What probable reason actuated Paul in writing the letter to the Philippians?  
Why did he want to send Timothy to them?  
What estimate did the apostle place upon Timothy?  
What important lesson does this have for us?  
Why was Timothy a wise and natural choice for the mission to Philippi?

#### The Use of Titus to Demonstrate a Principle

Why was Paul often put to the necessity of giving historical proof of the independence of his apostleship?  
Against what kind of background did he use Titus to prove his case?  
Why were the Judaizers so anxious to have the Gentile Christians circumcised?  
What was the apparent reason for the selection of Titus for this test?  
What does this imply regarding the character of Titus?  
What application does this principle have for us?

### The Places of Timothy and Titus in Christianity

Why do some students think that Paul did not write the letters to Timothy and Titus?

What reasons can you suggest for thinking that he did write them?

What is the importance of the pastoral epistles to us?

Why is it neither wise nor fair to array gospel preachers *against each* other?

What relative ideas do we get of Timothy and Titus from the over-all picture of

them which we have in the New Testament?

Discuss the probable characteristics of each of them.

What are the implications regarding the last reference which Paul made to Titus?

What important **lesson** do we learn from this?

Under what circumstance did Paul write his last letter to Timothy?

What can you say of his final plea for Timothy to come before winter?